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THE GREATER ABBEYS OF ENGLAND

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THE GREATER ABBEYS OF ENGLAND

By ABBOT GASQUET

ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR AFTER WARWICK GOBLE

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TO THE READER

THE Abbeys of England, ruined, dismantled, and time-worn, are fitting memorials of a great past. From any point of view, and whatever our opinion about the utility or purpose of monastic life in general and about English monastic life in particular, we are constrained to confess that the monks of old, who built up these "Cliffs of Walls" and ornamented them with all the wealth of carving, panelling, and moulding still to be traced amid the moss-grown ruins, have left, scattered over the whole face of their country, monuments of their great work and stone records of their existence in the land from the earliest period of our national history.

The fascination undoubtedly exerted over the mind of most people by these memorials of a past, whether actually in ruins or partially saved from the general wreck of the sixteenth century, may be taken to dispense with any apology for the existence of such a book as this. Those who go to visit what may be described, without exaggeration, as the most attractive spots in this land of many interests, old and new, naturally desire to possess some knowledge of the past history of these desecrated sanctuaries and to have some lasting memorial of their visit. Both the one and the other need may, it is hoped, be met by the production of this volume; whilst those who have not had the opportunity of visiting personally many of these old abbeys, may also find in it some attraction to the story of these

great monasteries which were, during many generations, real factors in the life and well-being of the English people.

Although this book with its artistic illustrations does not appear to call for any explanation or introduction in the ordinary sense, some few words on one particular point by way of Preface may, perhaps, be useful to the general reader. The spectacle of these ivy-clad and moss-grown buildings, roofless and weather-beaten by wellnigh four centuries of exposure to rain and frost, speaks of some great, some dire catastrophe. They lift to heaven's vault their broken walls, their capless pillars, their fragments of arches, like gaunt skeletons upraising their fleshless arms in warning or in protest. Some of them, indeed, are vast in size and, though ruined, are yet so little touched by the hand of time as to seem still peopled by the ghosts of the men who built them centuries ago. But one and all of these ruins which are scattered all over the face of England appear to be ever asking the question, "Why?" Why this wanton destruction? What wave of anger or madness has wrought the havoc? Why have these beautiful sanctuaries, which the piety and generosity of generations of Englishmen raised to the honour and glory of God, been wrecked and cast down into the dust?

The common answer to the riddle of these ruins would probably be that this complete and dire destruction came upon the religious houses in the days of Henry VIII, in popular and righteous indignation for

the wicked lives of the men who lived in them. They stand as a memorial for all time of "the vicious lives" these so-called religious men were living "under cover of their cowls and hoods." This is a common and ready explanation often given, and probably repeated in every ruin throughout the country, to account for the great catastrophe which overwhelmed the religious houses and has left these ruins as evidence of the storm. But is this the truth or anything like the truth?

What really happened to bring about the suppression of the English monasteries in the rapacious days of Henry VIII may here be usefully but briefly set out. The inception of the idea of destroying the monasteries may certainly be credited to the ingenious, capable and all-powerful minister of Henry VIII, Thomas Crumwell. He saw in the monastic property a gold mine, which, with a little management, could be worked to his master's great profit, and out of which pickings would no doubt be possible for himself and others. It was necessary to prepare the way: to the acute mind of Crumwell it was obvious that even the subservient and timorous Parliament of Henry would hardly hand over the private property of the monks and nuns without having some good reasons given them for so doing. The readiest way was to blacken the character of those they wished to rob and so convince the Parliament that they were not worth protecting.

Thomas Crumwell was Henry's Vicar-General in Spirituals, and acting in this capacity he projected a

royal visitation of all religious houses in the autumn of 1535. The subordinates chosen by the Vicar-General for the work were worthy instruments of their master, and their letters prove them to have been utterly unscrupulous and entirely reckless in their accusations. At the same time preachers were sent over the country to prepare the popular mind for the contemplated seizure of monastic property. These emissaries of Cromwell were instructed to orate against the monks as "hypocrites, sorcerers and idle drones," etc.; to tell the people that "the monks made the land unprofitable" and that "if the abbeys went down, the King would never want for any taxes again."

The destruction of the monasteries consequently was not only an item in the general policy of Henry and his minister, but it was certainly determined upon before the Visitors were sent on their rounds, and hence was quite independent of any reports they sent in.

It would be out of place to enter here into the details of the visitation. The work was done so rapidly that it was quite impossible that there could have been any serious inquiry into the moral state of the houses visited. That these men who acted for Cromwell in this matter suggested in their letters and reports all manner of evil against the good name of the monasteries, is true, and was quite what was to be expected.

But all these charges rest upon the word of these Visitors alone and from what is known of the character of these chosen instruments no reliance can be placed

upon them. Upon their testimony it has been said, "No one would dream of hanging a dog." For the benefit of any of my readers who may be inclined to think I am biassed in this matter I here set down what Dr Jessopp has to say about Crumwell's Visitors. "When the Inquisitors of Henry VIII and his Vicar-General Crumwell," he writes, "went on their tours of visitation, they were men who had no experience of the ordinary forms of inquiry which had hitherto been in use. They called themselves Visitors; they were, in effect, mere hired detectives of the very vilest stamp, who came to levy blackmail, and, if possible, to find some excuse for their robberies by vilifying their victims. In all the *comperta* which have come down to us there is not, if I remember rightly, a single instance of any report or complaint having been made to the Visitors from anyone outside. The enormities set down against the poor people accused of them, are said to have been confessed by themselves against themselves. In other words the *comperta* of 1535-6 can only be received as the horrible inventions of the miserable men who wrote them down upon their papers, well knowing that, as in no case could the charges be supported, so, on the other hand, in no case could they be met, nor were the accused ever intended to be put upon their trial."

That these reports were bad enough may be admitted, although even they by no means bear out the charges of wholesale corruption. It is usually asserted that it was upon the evidence of the reports, whatever their

worth, that Parliament condemned the monasteries to destruction. It is, however, quite impossible that either the reports, or any précis of them could have been submitted to the Commons, or any "Black Book" placed upon the table of the House at Westminster as so many modern authors would have us believe. One fact alone proves this. The Visitors inspected and reported upon all religious houses, great and small, and all are equally besmirched in their letters and reports. Consequently, if the actual documents had been presented to Parliament, it would have been impossible, in the preamble of the Act which was passed suppressing the lesser houses, to thank God that the others—"the great and solemn abbeys of the realm"—were in a wholesome and excellent state.

The truth about the matter is that, as the Act itself states, the Commons passed the Bill of Suppression on the strength of the King's declaration that he knew the facts to be as had been stated to them. It was for this reason alone they agreed to suppress them and by the King's desire drew the line of moral delinquency at £200 a year. The more the whole story is studied, the clearer it becomes that from first to last it was a question of money. Crumwell knew that he could not get the whole plum at once, and so prudently he advised his master to content himself at first with the smaller portion, which he tried to make men believe was rotten, whilst the rest was in an excellent and healthy state.

The £200 a year standard of "good living" set by

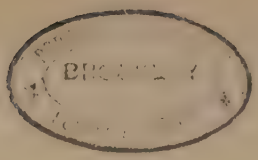
the Act, made it immediately necessary to ascertain which houses fell within the limit and had been handed by Parliament to the King to be dealt with according to his "good pleasure, to the honour of God and the wealth of the realm." Commissioners were appointed for the purpose of determining the fate of the various houses. They included some of the county gentry and other "discreet persons" of the neighbourhood, men who knew the locality and the members of the religious houses. Curiously enough, the reports sent in by these men almost always contradict the accounts of Cromwell's inquisitors. This is not the case only with one house or district, but as Dr James Gairdner remarks, in these reports when we have them, "the characters given of the inmates are almost uniformly good."

The dissolution of the lesser monasteries by virtue of the Act of 1536 accounts for some of the English monastic ruins. So anxious were the royal officials to make the most of the property that had come into their possession that they did not hesitate to cast down the timber of the roof and break up the carved stall work or screen for fuel to melt the lead into pigs. Many a fine church might have been saved to posterity, had the royal wreckers not been in such a hurry to realise all that could be got from the general wreck and to gather in what were called at the time the "Robin-hood pennyworths" for themselves.

The first Act of Dissolution, strange as the assertion may seem, was in fact the only one. The rest of the

abbeys were not legally suppressed. They came into Henry's hands by the attainder of abbots, as in the case of Woburn and Glastonbury, etc., or, as was generally the case, by the free, though coerced, surrender of the house into the royal power. Then, when all was over and the greater number of the monasteries and their possessions were already in the King's power, Parliament passed an Act giving Henry all he had got by force, or by his new interpretation of the law of attainder.

The process of gathering in the spoils in the case of each monastery was much the same as that employed in the case of the lesser houses; and by the time the professional wreckers had finished their work, the land was left covered from one end to the other with ruins. Many of these have gradually perished by neglect and natural decay; many have been used as public quarries and to get stone to mend roads, or build cottages and pigsties. Some have survived, melancholy memories of the past, but even in their desolation still among the finest architectural examples in the country.



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[*The drawing of Evesham Abbey, the ruins of which afford no idea of the original buildings, is founded, by permission, upon Mr W. Dowty's copyright reconstruction.*]

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THE GREATER ABBEYS OF ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

St Augustine's, Canterbury

VERY little remains to mark the place where once stood the first monastic establishment made on the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. Of the church only a few broken bits of late Roman work, with, to the south, some ruins of the Chapel of St Pancras with its tombs and ancient altar, survive to tell the tale of wanton destruction. Even the tower of St Ethelbert, which was built at the west end of the church in 1047, and probably was so termed because it held the great bell called by that name, was pulled down only in the last century. Of the monastery, besides the entrance gate built by Abbot Fyndon in 1300, the cemetery gate and the present college refectory are all that are left of the extensive buildings, which had a frontage of some 250 feet and the enclosure wall of which shut in sixteen acres. The present college refectory was the monastic guest hall, and its open roof remains unchanged to the present day. The wreckers of the sixteenth century, the neglect of succeeding generations and the active spoliation of those who sought stones for building or for mending the roads in the neighbourhood, have done their work of destruction only too well.

The story of the abbey of St Augustine's is, on the whole, uneventful, although not uninteresting. Canterbury became the earliest centre of Anglo-Saxon Christianity and civilization, and the abbey was apparently the first foundation made by the newly-converted King Ethelbert, and St Augustine, the apostle of our race, for the firm establishment of the religious life according to the rule of St Benedict, and in order to serve as the seat of learning in the newly-Christianised kingdom. Ethelbert was baptized in the year 597, probably in the old church of St Martin, used by Queen Bertha for Christian worship before the coming of Augustine. This chapel was situated in the suburbs of the city and without its walls, whilst near at hand, apparently, there was a temple for the worship of the Saxon deities, which at the request of Ethelbert, St Augustine dedicated as a Christian church under the patronage of St Pancras, the boy martyr of Rome. The spot was chosen outside the walls in order that it might form the burial place for kings and prelates, since by Saxon and British as well as by Roman law "burial within the city walls" was prohibited. In this case the dedication to the boy St Pancras was probably suggested by the memory of the Saxon youths of the Roman forum who, according to the well-known story, induced Pope St Gregory the Great to think of the conversion of England. In the first instance, then, it would appear that the situation of St Augustine's Abbey was chosen as the place of burial for kings,

prelates and others. It was on the road to Rutupiæ, the port of embarkation for Gaul, now Richborough, from Ethelbert's capital, and it has been suggested that it was intended to make an English Appian Way.

In a very few years Ethelbert determined to establish in the same place a monastery under the patronage of SS. Peter and Paul. This was in 605, but in 613 the church was dedicated to St Laurence, and the body of St Augustine was transported hither and buried in the porch. From this time the renown of the place increased since it became known as the burial place of the illustrious dead; and almost from the first the monastery became known as St Augustine's Abbey. Its early greatness was undoubtedly due to the fame of those who were buried in the church, and until the death of Archbishop Cuthbert in 758, all the Archbishops of Canterbury had their last resting-places at St Augustine's, which was known as the *Mater primaria*, the "first mother" of all such English institutions. Indeed, long after it had ceased to hold its pre-eminence as a place of sepulture, popes speak of it as "the firstborn," the "first and chief mother of monasteries in England," and as "the Roman chapel in England," whilst the archbishops are warned if they visit it, not to do so as its prelate or with authority, but as the brother of the monks. Whilst the abbot of St Albans had the papal grant permitting him to sit first in all English meetings of the Benedictine Order, the abbot of St Augustine's was privi-

leged by Pope Leo IX to sit among the Benedictine prelates in general councils next to the abbot of Monte Cassino.

As I have said, it was undoubtedly the presence of the illustrious and sainted dead which gave such renown to the abbey, and in particular it was the shrine of St Augustine which attracted crowds of pilgrims to the church from the earliest times of English Christianity until the martyrdom of St Thomas in the neighbouring church diverted the stream of devotion to the cathedral. Indeed the list of the dead who slept the sleep of the just at St Augustine's is most remarkable and makes us all the more regret that in the sixteenth century no greater respect was paid to the tombs and remains of kings and queens than to the relics of the saints. Here are the names of some few whose tombs were then ruthlessly destroyed and their remains scattered to the winds: King Ethelbert and his Queen Bertha, who, together with Letard, Bishop of Soissons and chaplain of the Queen, rested in the portico of St Martin's; the bodies of King Eadbald and Emma his Queen were in the porch of St Catherine's, where also were the tombs of King Ercombert and Lothaire with the latter's daughter Mildred, and two other kings; Archbishops Augustine, Laurence, Mellitus, Justus, Honorius and Deusdedit were in the porch of the church; Archbishops Theodore, Brithwald, Tatwin and Nothelm in the church itself.

The centre of devotion at St Augustine's was, as I

GATEWAY, ST. AUGUSTINE'S ABBEY, CANTERBURY

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have said, naturally the shrine of St Augustine himself, the apostle of our race. A picture of the fifteenth century, copied in Dugdale's *Monasticon* from a manuscript in Trinity College, Cambridge, shows roughly the disposition of the altar at St Augustine's, with the bodies of saints and other relics surrounding it. Two doors, one on either side of the Great Altar, led into the feretory where most of the relics were placed. At the most easternly end over an altar dedicated to the Holy Trinity in 1240 rested the shrine containing the body of St Augustine, and on the right of this were three other shrines with the bodies of St Laurence, St Justus and St Deusdedit, whilst on the left were similarly disposed those of St Mellitus, St Honorius and St Theodore. Two semicircular chapels, one on either side, contained on the right the body of St Mildred with an altar dedicated in 1270, and on the left an altar to SS. Stephen, Laurence and Vincent, with the shrine containing the relics of St Adrian the Abbot, and companion of St Theodore. In the space between these chapels and the back of the High Altar were arranged the shrines of St Nothelm and St Lombert on the one side, and those of St Brithwald and St Tatwin on the other.

The High Altar was dedicated in A.D. 1325 to SS. Peter and Paul, St Augustine, the apostle of the English, and St Ethelbert, King. Above it were the body of St Letard and other relics: on the altar rested the shrine of St Ethelbert and on either side were the

precious books which, according to tradition, Pope St Gregory had sent over to England by St Augustine. These books were appropriately called by Elmham, the chronicler of the abbey, *primitiæ librorum ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*—the first books of the English Church. That St Gregory the Great did send over many manuscripts to England by St Augustine or his followers we know from St Bede, whose information was obtained from the eighth Abbot of St Augustine's. Although no doubt many of these valuable volumes must have perished in the fire which partially wrecked the abbey in 1168, Thorne, in relating the catastrophe in his chronicle, is satisfied that his monastery still possessed at least some of these precious books, a tradition which was handed down by Leland on the eve of the dissolution. At the present day it is believed by many that the Gospel Book in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and the celebrated Psalter, Vespasian A. I., in the British Museum, are two of the volumes originally placed over the altar in St Augustine's abbey church as being among the "Gregorian books" sent by the Pope to England on its conversion to the Faith. Others, it is right to add, consider that they are only copies of these volumes.

I have said that the long history of this Benedictine abbey was, on the whole, uneventful. This may be taken to mean that there were few incidents to interfere with the even course of the life lived in the cloister and devoted to the works of religion. "Happy the

nation that has no history" is, perhaps, more true of a religious community such as that of St Augustine's, outside the walls of Canterbury, than of a people. It had its difficulties, of course, and there was at times considerable friction with the archbishops as to the right of giving the abbatial blessing and of demanding an oath of obedience. Its Benedictine brethren in the neighbouring Priory of Christ Church were not always on the best of terms with it. But these differences did not last long, at least not long in the whole course of its life, and from the facts as they are stated it would seem that in all these—shall we call them contests?—St Augustine's was only claiming and clinging to its rights and privileges, as every corporation is bound to do.

John Sturvey, otherwise known as John Essex, was the last abbot of St Augustine's, and in July 1538, coerced by Dr Layton the King's Commissioner, he resigned his office and the property of the abbey into the King's hands. It has commonly been thought that when the end came a dark shadow rested over the good name of the house. In the later centuries that preceded its destruction St Augustine's was naturally somewhat overshadowed by its great monastic neighbour of Christ Church, which, as the See of the Metropolitan, occupied the first place in the Church of England. The monastery was not known in any way to have moved with the times: it had no particular reputation for learning, nor special usefulness, nor work, at a time when men's minds generally were being stirred by the revival of

letters. Besides this negatively bad character, positive charges of the most odious kind were formulated by the visitors of Henry against the last abbot, John Essex, and some at least of his monks. Probably there are few in these days who are willing to believe such charges made by such witnesses without some evidence other than the word of the discredited and interested royal agents. Luckily, in the case of the last abbot and one of his monks, against whom the most revolting suggestions had been made, we have the assertion of one who knew them well that they were men of upright character and exceptional culture. The conversation in which this testimony is given is supposed to have taken place in the country house to which John Essex, or Vokes as he is called, the last abbot, had retired, and the other two taking part in it are John Dygon, the last prior of the house, and Dr Nicholas Wotton, who, becoming first Dean of the Cathedral of Christ Church upon the expulsion of the monks, was considered to be one of the most brilliant men of his time. Though the conversation was imaginary, John Twyne, the antiquary, who composed it, declares that not only were the characters capable in life of sustaining the rôles he set them, but that frequently in reality he had heard similar discussions carried on between them. He adds, and this is much to the point, "Above all the many people whom I have ever known I have especially revered two, because in these days they were above all others remarkable for the high character

of their moral lives and for their excellent knowledge of all antiquity. These were John Vokes and John Dygon. The first was the most worthy abbot, the second the most upright prior of the ancient monastery of St Augustine—and the abbot was a hale old man of the highest personal sanctity of life." In this book, therefore, in place of the abbot being a man given up to odious vice, we find a cultured, cultivated, courteous Christian gentleman, worthy, as Nicholas Wotton declares, "of all reverence and respect." We see him as the friend of every kind of learning and ready to encourage it in others: we see him as an antiquary, to whose well-stored mind men were only too willing to appeal for information: one who could understand what a loss to scholarship the destruction of the Canterbury libraries had been, and one who on the very eve of the destruction of his house was in communication with learned men in Rome to procure some early prints of the classics for the library of St Augustine's Abbey.

CHAPTER II

St Albans

ON the great north road, the Watling Street of Roman times, and at the first stage out of London, as it was accounted in pre-railway days, stands the town of St Albans. Towering above the other buildings of the place rise what Ruskin somewhere calls the "great cliff walls" of the old abbey church. Looked at from any point of view—from the poor cress-grown little river Ver, or from the rising ground to the south, or from the crumbling walls of Roman Verulam—this great church stands out from the rest of the surroundings as an object not easily to be forgotten. In some ways it is unlike any other building in England; the long straight ridge of the roof, the longest of any English church, is a fitting cresting to the cliffs of walls; the solid and almost sternly simple character of the transepts, especially as they appeared before the hand of the so-called restorer was heavy upon them, are fit supports for the low, square central tower which crowns the vast buildings spreading out below it. From any point of view the church is truly stupendous! But to those who know its history there is something sad and melancholy about the solitary pile, as it stands now a silent and

majestic *monument* of what St Albans once was in the days of its glory. Its walls once looked down upon a vast assemblage of buildings of which it was the centre; towers and gables, courtyards and cloisters; kitchens and guest-houses, stables and offices stretched out far over the space to the south and west, a veritable town of conventual buildings. All these have vanished, alas! and to-day there remains of them only the broken and defaced ruins of the old gatehouse; even the glorious church itself was saved, in the rapacious days of Henry VIII, from becoming the common quarry of the neighbourhood, by the timely purchase of its desecrated walls for £400 by the people of the township.

The story of St Albans goes back to the close of the eighth century. About that time Offa, king of the Mercians, in recognition of his sins and in particular in expiation for the murder of Ethelbert, king of East Anglia, vowed to build a monastery for a hundred monks. He chose the spot upon which, in 401, St Lupus of Troyes had erected a church over the relics of St Alban, the protomartyr of Britain, who had suffered death in A.D. 304, during the Diocletian persecution. These relics were translated by Offa to his new foundation in 793, and in this way was begun the great Benedictine house of St Albans, which from the first was enriched by the gifts of the English kings and by spiritual privileges accorded by Pope Adrian I and his successors. In the year 930 the Abbey was attacked by the Danes and plundered. The relics of its patron,

St Alban, were carried off to Denmark; but subsequently, through a clever ruse of the sacristan of the abbey, who was inconsolable for the loss, they were recovered by the monks, and "Master John of St Albans, the incomparable Goldsmith," as the chronicler calls him, "made the first shrine for the relics."

The mention of the shrine suggests some brief account of the subsequent history of this work of art. The beginning of the twelfth century was a time most remarkable at St Albans for the perfection of its metal work. A renowned goldsmith, by name Anketil, who had been one of the chief artificers in precious metals at the Court of Denmark and the designer of the coins of that kingdom, returned to England and became a monk of St Albans. Geoffrey, the sixteenth abbot of the monastery, who ruled the house from A.D. 1119 to 1146, was not slow to recognize the importance of making use of his exceptional talents in restoring the shrine for the relics of the patron Saint. Leofric, the tenth abbot, during a famine, had sold the treasures of the church to feed the poor, "retaining only certain precious gems for which he could find no purchaser, and some most wonderfully carved stones, commonly called *cameos*, the greater part of which were reserved to ornament the shrine when it should be made." So in 1124 the great work was begun. And, says the chronicler, "it happened that by the labour of Dom Anketil the work prospered and grew so as to claim the admiration of all who saw it." The chief

part of the shrine proper was apparently what would to-day be called repoussé work, and the figures that the goldsmith monk hammered out in the golden plates were made solid by cement poured into the hollows at the back.

Here, for a time, the work was delayed, and the metal cresting which had been designed to crown the whole was left till more prosperous times. But to enrich the work somewhat more, if possible, the antiques called *sardios oniclios*, which, as the chronicle says, are "vulgarly cameos," were brought out of the treasury and fitted into the gold work. To this resting place the relics of the Saint were translated on August 2, 1129. Not long after, however, the poor of the neighbourhood were again afflicted with great scarcity, and the abbot to relieve their necessities had to strip away from the shrine much of the gold-worked plates and turn the precious metal into money. After a few succeeding years of prosperity, however, Abbot Geoffrey was again enabled to restore "the shrine with silver and gold and gems more precious than before."

The same abbot employed Dom Anketil, the metal-working artist, to fashion a wonderful chalice and paten of gold as a present to Pope Celestine. The account we have also of the wonderful vestments with which he enriched the Sacristy proves that this first half of the twelfth century was an age of great artistic work at St Albans. We read of copes, for instance, in sets of sevens and fours, of chasubles and dalmatics, of

worked albs and of dorsals, all thickly woven with gold and studded with jewels. So rich, indeed, were they that, alas! they tempted Abbot Geoffrey's successor in a time of straitness by the very wealth of their material, and they were burnt to ashes to recover the metal used in the manufacture of the golden cloth, or laid as more solid ornaments on to the finished material.

In speaking of the "shrine" of St Albans we have been carried somewhat too quickly over the general story of the abbey. As in the case of most of the other Saxon houses, St Albans suffered by the coming of the Norman Conqueror. Abbot Frederick, who was a relation of King Canute, began his rule only in 1066, the year of the battle of Hastings. His sympathies were with his countrymen, and in order to impede William's march to Berkhampstede, he caused the trees which grew along the roadside to be felled across it. At Berkhampstede, too, he obtained from the Conqueror the promise to respect the laws of the kingdom, and in particular those of Edward the Confessor. Then, fearing the King's vengeance, he fled to Ely, where in a brief time he died.

Frederick's death opened the way to the appointment of a Norman Superior, and after keeping the abbatial office vacant for a time, William appointed Paul, a monk of Caen and a nephew of Archbishop Lanfranc, to the office. Here, for a time, as in other places, the English monks had to submit to foreign

ST. ALBANS CATHEDRAL FROM VERULAM HILLS

BRICKLEY

customs and to witness the neglect of the cultus of the old Saxon saints, and the introduction of that to which their conquerors had been accustomed. Thus the Bec customal was enforced at St Albans, and the gift of eight psalters to the choir by Abbot Paul in 1085 seems to suggest that the old version of the psalms used in England was at this time changed from the French or "Gallican" recension.

This Abbot Paul, however, began the erection of the great church, portions of which still remain as his lasting monument, and which recall the similar and contemporary building in his native city of Caen. The six eastern bays on the north, together with some of the outer walling work, are mere remnants of this early building. Abbot Paul did not live to see the completion of his great work, but died in 1097, and it was not until 1115 that the church of St Albans was consecrated by the Archbishop of Rouen in the presence of King Henry I, his queen and the principal nobles and ecclesiastics of the kingdom. On this occasion 300 poor people were entertained in the court of the monastery.

In 1119 Geoffrey de Gorham became abbot, and the story of his connexion with the abbey is curious and interesting. He had come originally as a layman from Maine at the invitation of the abbot to teach in the St Albans school. Something delayed his journey, and on reaching the place he, finding the position already occupied, went on to Dunstable to lecture until

such time as there was a vacancy at St Albans. Whilst there he wrote a miracle play of St Katherine, for the performance of which he borrowed the abbey choral copes. The night after the representation his house, where the vestments were, was burned down, and the copes were all destroyed in the flames. In atonement he offered himself as a monk at St Albans, and he was subsequently chosen as abbot. It was because he was mindful of the misfortune to the copes that in after years, as Matthew Paris notes, he was careful to provide rich choir copes for use in his church.

It is, of course, impossible to follow the history of the abbey in detail, and a very brief summary alone can be given. Of the church as it stands a few words only may be allowed. As I have said, the six eastern bays on the north side are Norman, the rest date from 1214-35. On the south side the five western bays are of the same date, the rest was begun by Abbot Eversdon in decorated work about 1323 and raised by 1326 to the triforium. This building was necessitated by the collapse of a great portion of the church, and the fall of many of the pillars during the singing of Mass in the first-named year. Its reparation was continued by Abbot Mentmore, the successor of Richard de Wallingford, known to posterity for the construction of a celebrated astronomical clock, representations of which are to be found in some of the St Albans books in the British Museum.

Michael de Mentmore constructed the ceiling of

the south aisle of the church, which had been newly built, together with the cloister. He also furnished the convent with books and vestments. In 1341 he was called upon to baptize Edmund, the fifth son of King Edward III. He died in 1349, the year of the great pestilence, or Black Death as it is now called; and with him at that calamitous time died the prior, sub-prior and forty-seven of the brethren of St Albans.

The original rood screen erected in 1360 has on either side of the rood-altar door which opened into a choir entry, a passage being left between the stalls and the screen. The choir projected three bays into the nave, and the presbytery had three bays in length. The great reredos built at a cost of 1,100 marks by Abbot Wallingford (1476-94), has two doors opening into the feretory for processional and other liturgical purposes. The story goes that the screen was suggested by that of Winchester, returning from the dedication of which the St Albans monks with their abbot determined to erect one somewhat similar. The staircase to the monks' dormitory is in the south-west angle of the south-west transept; at the level of the cloister-roof it communicated with a passage leading to a watching-loft, still remaining in the west wall. It was opposite to this that once stood the great image of the Blessed Virgin, before which, as the chronicle tells us, stood a taper wreathed with flowers.

In the feretory may still be seen a watching chamber or loft erected in 1430, and the mutilated remains of

the base of St Albans shrine in Purbeck marble with quatrefoiled apertures, below canopied niches for figures. It is of fourteenth-century work, and is carved with the crucifix, with the Blessed Virgin and St John, and with the acts of the Saint. Upon this base stood the wonderful shrine in precious metal and its almost equally wonderful cover. This last was made by "that most renowned artificer," and he is called, "Master John the Goldsmith." "In a few years," writes the chronicler, "this laborious, sumptuous, and most artistic work was happily accomplished; and he [i.e., Abbot Simon] placed it in its present elevated position, that is above the High Altar facing the celebrant, so that every priest offering Mass upon the altar may have both in sight and in heart the memory of the martyr, since visible to the eye of the celebrant was represented the martyrdom or decapitation." On the western end of the shrine, in well-raised metal work and surrounded by gems and precious golden knobs, the artist enthroned an image of the Blessed Virgin holding her Son to her breast and seated on a throne. Above this structure again rose the roof of this feretory, and at its four angles were placed "windowed turrets," surrounded with what the writer calls "four lovely crystal domes with their marvels." Under this was the precious shrine itself which had been enriched by a succession of abbots with the most precious jewels. On the top of the cresting sat an eagle in silver gilt with its wings outspread, which Abbot de la Mare had made in the fourteenth century

ST. ALBANS CATHEDRAL: THE NORMAN TOWER

at the cost of £20—some £400 of our money. Besides this golden eagle fixed on the cresting of the shrine were "two suns" of pure gold, the long rays of which were of silver gilt and on the tip of each was set some precious stone.

Lastly, Abbot Whethamstede in the fifteenth century presented to the altar of the Saint, which stood at the western end of the shrine, a *tabula* in solid silver. It was apparently a wonderful example of English goldsmith work, and was of beaten metal fully gilt. As the chronicle says: "There is not thought to be another more grand and sumptuous in the whole of this kingdom." Let us try and imagine the effect of this wonderful work of art, no vestige of which now remains. Jewels of all kinds, gems, cameos, and all manner of precious stones thickly studded the framework of the marvellous repoussé pictures, and sparkled in the light of the tapers ever burning round the shrine. On the cresting of the high-pitched roof perched the eagle with its overshadowing wings, and on either side were the golden suns with their jewelled rays! Such was the shrine itself, which thrice in a year, upon Ascension day and on the two festivals of St Alban, was taken from its pedestal and borne in procession by four priests in copes, and on these occasions it was wont to be covered by the rich cloth of woven gold presented for that purpose by Thomas Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester.

In speaking of St Albans, it is impossible not to mention the scriptorium and library of the Abbey. The *Gesta*

Abbatum says that the nineteenth abbot did much to attract learned men to the cloister. He was a great book collector, and to him may be traced the origin of the school of St Albans chroniclers, to whom we owe so much of our knowledge of English history. The names of Matthew Paris and Walsingham alone are sufficient to claim the gratitude of all generations for the work of the St Albans historical writers, whilst the volumes of the St Albans chroniclers testify to the honesty with which they set down their annals and to their true historical methods.

It must be added that St Albans obtained from the Pope the rank of premier abbey among English Benedictine houses. The Pope who granted this privilege, Pope Adrian IV, had in his youth been connected with the monastery: his father had become a monk, and the son, then a youth, requested to be allowed to follow his parent's example. He failed, however, to satisfy those who were appointed to examine him as to the sufficiency of his learning, and he was rejected. He subsequently studied in Paris, and finally became Cardinal and Pope.

Situated so near the capital and on a much frequented road, the Abbey of St Albans underwent many vicissitudes in the troubles which at various times afflicted the country. It suffered much at the close of the fourteenth century in the labour troubles from the demands of its tenants, and, judged by our standards, the abbots were not always too wise in repressing what seems to us the legitimate aspiration of their dependents. Its

peculiar position in the ecclesiastical world brought with it many misunderstandings and not a few serious quarrels. During the civil war of the fifteenth century its sympathies were engaged on the one side too much for its peace. On the whole it would appear to have been governed wisely and well, although a letter written by Cardinal Morton towards the close of its long history seems to suggest that there were serious and even scandalous matters to redress. The fact, however, that as the result of the inquiry the superior remained unchanged, would seem to show that the reports, which may have been in part at least political, were found to be devoid of truth. At any rate it is obviously unjust to condemn any house or individual on mere rumour alone.

Before the close of the history of St Albans the art of printing was introduced and seems to have been practised from 1480 in the monastery. On the death of Abbot Ramridge, Cardinal Wolsey obtained leave from the King to hold the abbacy of St Albans *in commendam*—the first and, luckily, almost the only instance of the pernicious practice in England. On his death, however, in 1530, the monks were allowed to make choice of a superior in the person of Robert Caton, prior of Norwich. On his death in 1538 the prior of the house, Richard Boreman or Stevenage, was chosen to fill his place. And as he surrendered his house to the King, it has usually been supposed that his appointment was made for the purpose of handing over his charge to his royal master.

CHAPTER III

Battle Abbey

BATTLE ABBEY was founded by William the Conqueror to commemorate the battle of Hastings and to fulfil his vow to erect such a monastery should he obtain the victory in that decisive fight. The foundation was dedicated to St Martin, and the building was placed upon the rising ground which looks down upon the rolling valleys which slope southwards towards the bay of Hastings. It occupies the classic site of Senlac, where the last stand was made by the English under Harold, on the memorable day of the battle of Hastings, October 14, 1066. In consequence of his vow William began to build the abbey a year after the fight, and William of Malmesbury records the tradition that the High Altar was placed on the very spot where Harold fell, and where the English royal standard was found after the battle. Mr Gough, the eminent English antiquary, writing in 1789, says: "This spot is just at the eastern white gate of the yard wall: the foundations were not long since removed, the site having served as a burial place for Catholics."

It is said that amongst those who heard William's vow on the night before Hastings was a monk named William Faber. He had formerly been in the Con-

queror's service, but had renounced the profession of arms to become a religious at the abbey of Marmoutier. When the descent of the Duke upon England was determined upon, the monk, William, joined the army as a chaplain and, on hearing the vow before the battle, proposed that, in the event of the abbey being built, it should be dedicated to St Martin, the patron of his monastery of Marmoutier, this William at once promised should be done.

According to the Conqueror's original design "the monastery of St Martin of Battle" was intended to serve for 140 monks, although in fact provision was ultimately made for sixty only. The Abbey of Marmoutier in Normandy furnished the religious, who were, of course, Benedictines. A monk named Blancard was destined to be the first abbot of the new foundation, but after going back to his monastery to make some necessary arrangements on taking up his office, he was drowned whilst crossing back to England. Another monk of Marmoutier, named Gausbert, was thereupon appointed in 1076.

King William did not live to see the completion of his work, for although the church was really begun in 1076 it was not entirely finished until 1095. When completed, it measured 315 feet in length, and the chronicler relates that the Conqueror had intended to make it 500 feet. According to the legend, King William dreamt that he was to build a church the length of which in feet should equal in number the years his

descendants were to rule in England. Thrice in his dream he essayed to set the foundations east and west 500 feet apart, but each time the length measured only 315 feet, and in consequence the length of the church was determined at this measure.

When William the Conqueror lay dying at Rouen, he was not unmindful of the abbey he had raised in England to commemorate his conquest. He charged his son William that, on his return to take the crown which was to be his inheritance, he should add liberally to the endowments of the house. He himself, moreover, gave, says the chronicle, "his royal pallium and very costly gems, as well as three hundred amulets wrought of gold and silver, to many of which were attached chains of those metals, and which contained innumerable relics of the saints. He gave likewise a feretory in the form of an altar, in which were also many relics and upon which in his expeditions Mass was wont to be celebrated."

There is a good deal left of the domestic buildings of Battle; of the church not much; a fragment of the south-west end of the church, the cloister door, the south wall of the nave and the crypt of the Lady Chapel are all that remain. Of the claustral portion what still stand are the buildings on the west walk of the cloister of nine bays; portions of the refectory built in 1275 on the south side; traces of the entrance to the chapter-house on the east. On this same side were the dormitory, 154 feet in length, and other buildings

including the calefactory or common room, 60 feet by 37, a magnificent room with pillars.

The majestic gateway, with the courthouse and porter's lodge on either side, as well as the enclosure wall, built in the first half of the fourteenth century, are in excellent preservation to-day; so, too, is the guest-hall on the south-west, which is 195 feet long by 40 feet broad, and is now divided up into store chambers, etc.

The first Abbot, Gausbert, appointed, as already related, in 1076, died in the very year of the dedication of the church and, in place of allowing a free election to the monks, William Rufus, by the advice of Anselm, imposed upon the monastery Henry, the prior of Christ Church, Canterbury. He was received at Battle on June 11, 1096, and at once sent to his old monastery for a number of monks of that house to help him in governing Battle. This naturally caused great dissatisfaction and led to many difficulties.

In 1107, the abbacy being vacant, King Henry sent for a certain monk of Caen, "renowned for his piety and prudence," Ralph by name, and appointed him abbot. He was already well known in England, as he had come over with Archbishop Lanfranc and had been for some time in the monastery at Rochester. "Under the administration of this venerable man," says the chronicler, "the abbey attained such a pitch of honour, by his providence, by the faithful care of the brethren, and by the display of hospitality to all

without needless delay, that it became second to none of the monasteries of England in regard of religion, bounty, clemency, charity and the reputation of humanity."

It was during the rule of this abbot that a feretory was made to contain the relics of the saints given to the monastery by the Conqueror and others which they had since obtained. This shrine was made of gold and silver, and is said to have been of "very choice workmanship and adorned with many valuable jewels."

Under Abbot Ralph the abbey prospered exceedingly both within and without. Loving the beauty of God's house, he caused the church to be roofed with lead and completed what had been left undone in the general structure. He added to the buildings of the monastery and decorated it in a manner suitable to its purpose. What the chronicle says of him is too interesting not to be given at length. "Although he continually governed those who were under his authority, yet he was himself ever obedient to the rules and commanded no one as a master. He sustained the infirmities of others and made them strong. His deeds corresponded with what he taught: his example preceded his precept. He inculcated a prompt attendance at divine service and, supporting his aged limbs upon his staff, he always came to choir, even before the young men. Ever first in the church, he was uniformly the last to quit it. Thus he was a pattern of good works; a Martha and a Mary. He was the serpent and the dove: he was a

GATEWAY, BATTLE ABBEY

Noah amidst the waters. Whilst he never willingly rejected the raven, he always gladly received the dove. He governed the clean and the unclean and was a prudent ruler under all circumstances. . . . [Whilst seeing to the cultivation of the monastic lands] he overlooked not the spiritual husbandry, tilling earthly hearts with the ploughshare of good doctrine in many books which he wrote, stimulating them thereby to bear the fruit of good works; and though his style was homely, yet was it rich in the way of morality.

"In the sparingness of his food he was a Daniel; in the sufferings of his body a Job; in the bowing of his knees a Bartholomew, bending them full often in supplication, though he could scarce move them in walking. Every day he recited the whole Psalter in order, hardly ceasing in his genuflexions and his Psalmody three days before his death. Neither his racking cough, nor his vomiting of blood, nor his advanced age, nor the attenuation of his flesh to hardly more than mere skin, availed to daunt this man nor to turn him aside from any point of his elevated piety. But lo! after many agonies and bodily sufferings, when he was eighty-four years of age and had been a monk sixty years and thirty-six days, and when he had been Abbot of Battle seventeen years and twenty days, the great Householder summoned him to the reward of his day's penny. It was on the fourth of the Kalends of September in the evening of the day, that this holy, sweet, and humble father departed. He was lying upon his lowly

couch, after partaking of a little food, and had devoutly blessed several of the brethren, when the end came."

A considerable portion of the chronicle of Battle Abbey in the times immediately following this is taken up with the settlements of disputes as to jurisdiction and the rights of bishops over the abbey. In one of these St Thomas Becket appears as the King's Chancellor in the great suit which was heard before the King in person.

Of one of these abbots, Odo, the chronicler writes: "He was a pattern of a holy life to all in word and deed. Rich in the bowels of compassion, he relieved every one who sought his assistance. His hospitality knew no respect of persons, the abbey gates stood open to all comers who needed either refreshment or lodging. For those persons whom the rule of the establishment forbade to sleep within the abbey he provided entertainment without the circuit of its walls. He associated with the brethren in all the Divine Office in the abbey church, in reading and in meditation in the cloister; he took his food in the refectory, in short, he was as one of themselves except that he did not sleep in the common dormitory. Nothing of pride was to be seen in his carriage, his actions and his habits, and nothing that savoured of levity."

On the whole the lives of the series of abbots, until the dissolution of the monastery in 1539, do not present any features of particular interest to the general reader. The even tenor of the regular observance in

the monastery, which was apparently disturbed by nothing which merited to be specially recorded, may be taken to speak well of men whose chief duty, according to the terms of their foundation, was to pray for the souls of those who had perished in the great slaughter when William I conquered England.

The last abbot, John Hamond, was elected in 1529. When Dr Layton, in 1536, came to Battle as one of Henry VIII's commissioners, he did not find Abbot Hamond as ready as he wished to meet the fate that awaited his monastery. He ordered him to court to be dealt with by Crumwell himself, and he thus bespeaks his master's attention to his case: "The abbot of Battle is the varaste hayne betle and buserde, and the arants chorle that ever I see. In all other places whereat I come, specially the black sort of develish monks, I am sorry to know as I do. Surely I thynke they be paste amendement and that God hath utterly withdrawn his grace from them."

Speed, on the authority of these visitors, a specimen of whose judicial temper is given above and whose testimony no one now credits, represents Abbot Hamond and several of his monks as having an infamous reputation. "This," says Dugdale, "is hardly reconcilable with the grant made to this abbot of a pension at the dissolution, particularly as the instrument which bestowed the pension stipulated that it should be vacated in case of the King preferring him to the cure of souls. The same applies also to the other

monks of Battle who were included in those secret and never-inquired-into accusations. Moreover, it must be remembered that these charges were made to Crumwell before the meeting of Parliament in 1536, which dissolved the smaller religious houses and when, according to the King's positive assertion, made before the passing of that Act, there was actual evidence to show that in the greater monasteries, of which Battle was one, religion was right well observed and maintained. Finally—when three years later, in 1539, pressure was brought to bear upon the superiors of the greater houses to force them to yield the houses into the King's hands, John Gage and Richard Layton, who went to take the surrender of Battle, wrote on May 26 to say that the deed had been signed, and that all was in their hands. There was then no need to blacken the character of those who had been despoiled, and so nothing whatever is said about these charges and, on the contrary, pensions were granted to the abbot and to each of the monks, four of whom were university men, with degrees in theology.

CHAPTER IV

Beaulieu

THE Cistercian Abbey of Beaulieu is picturesquely situated in the New Forest, not far from Southampton Water, and opposite to its daughter house of Netley. Founded in 1204 by King John, it soon became an important house of the Order; it sent forth colonies to Hales and Newenham as well as to Netley; it owned extensive landed property, and its superior was a mitred abbot with a seat in the House of Peers. Now only a few ruins remain to mark the place where it stood, whilst, as a curious contrast, Netley over the water, its comparatively humble daughter, stands, as far at least as the church is concerned, almost as perfect as the day when the royal wreckers of the sixteenth century left it to unprotected decay.

At Beaulieu the remains include the sacristy and a recess for a cloister cupboard or aumbry; the front of the chapter house with an entrance of three arches; on the east side of the cloister garth the common house; on the west two long buildings standing over undercrofts 285 feet in length and divided by a passage and a wall from the cloister. A range of seven recesses, probably for studies, fills the north wall, and on the

south are the refectory (125 feet by 30 feet) and the remains of the lavatory. In the wall of the refectory is a charming pulpit, or reading place, with the stairway leading up to it. Of the church little or nothing is left, if we exclude the foundation of the main pillars, which have been uncovered.

Besides this there is the main gateway still standing, the watergate, and to the north what is variously called a barn and a winepress. This watergate may, perhaps, suggest some explanation of why so much of the buildings of Beaulieu have disappeared altogether. The abbey was situated on the Beaulieu river, a waterway to the sea which afforded an excellent opportunity for barges to carry off the stones quarried out of the dismantled walls and convey them to where they would be useful for some building or other. It used to be said that much of the material was taken to raise forts for the defence of the coast in this part of the country, and people were wont to point to Calshot Castle in particular, as being able to account for a good deal of the Beaulieu Abbey buildings in its foundations.

But to go back to the story of this Cistercian house. On its first establishment by King John in 1204, it was colonized by Citeaux itself. The royal charter speaks of it as being intended for thirty monks, but apparently twenty-two only came to settle in the place chosen, and which from its beautiful surroundings and royal founder was at once called Royal Beaulieu—*Abbatia de Bello-loco Regis*. A legend is connected

BEAULIEU ABBEY: DOOR OF THE ABBEY CHURCH

BROOKLEY

with the foundation. It is said that King John treated the Cistercians in England in no better way than he did his other subjects. On the occasion of one special demand for a large subsidy the abbots of the Order journeyed to Lincoln to see the King in person and to expostulate with him. John was in no amiable frame of mind, and on seeing the abbots and hearing what their mission was he ordered his mounted men to ride them down with their horses—"an unjust, wicked and unheard-of order for any Christian man to give," says the chronicler. Of course the King's servants refused to use them thus and even took the abbots to their own lodgings. But this was not to be the end of the matter: according to the writer of the narrative, the following night, when King John had retired to bed, he saw in a vision or dreamt that he saw, the Judgement Seat set up and himself brought by the abbots before it for condemnation. In the result these good religious men were ordered by the judge to scourge the King with whips for his treatment of their Order. Even next morning, when the vision and its lesson were almost forgotten, King John seemed to feel the result of his castigation, at least so the story goes, and he consulted a friend about this strange experience. His adviser told him that it was evidently a sign that heaven was angry at the way in which he had treated the Cistercian abbots, and suggested that he should make amends to the Order by building them a house. He accepted the advice and promised to esta-

blish a monastery in the New Forest at the place now known as Beaulieu.

The church, of which nothing but the foundations is left, was 355 feet long, with double choir aisles. It was consecrated with great ceremony in the presence of Henry III, Queen Eleanor, their son Prince Edward and others, in 1269. Queen Isabella, wife of the founder, King John, was buried in the choir of the church. In 1471 Margaret of Anjou took refuge in the Sanctuary at Beaulieu, and in 1491 Perkin Warbeck for a time was harboured within its walls. In this latter case, however, watch was kept day and night upon the place by Lord Daubigny, who surrounded the walls with 300 horsemen, and ultimately, seeing escape hopeless, Perkin Warbeck surrendered to them.

In the list of abbots are to be found the names of three who subsequently became bishops in England. These were Hugh, who was made Bishop of Carlisle in 1218 and was the builder of the choir of his cathedral; Tideman of Winchcombe, created Bishop of Worcester in 1380, and Thomas Skeffington, Bishop of Bangor in 1505, who built the tower of the cathedral.

Besides the daughter-houses already named, Beaulieu established two cells, one in Cornwall, at a place called Llanachebran or St Keveran, where there had been a house of secular canons till the Norman conquest; and Farringdon in Berkshire. This last-named was a manor which had been given by King John to Citeaux in 1203 on condition that an abbey of the Order should

BEAULIEU: THE ABBOT'S HOUSE

be founded there; but the next year, 1204, on the establishment of Beaulieu in Hampshire, it was agreed that the donation should be transferred to this house, and a few monks of Beaulieu were established here under the ordinary conditions which regulated the government of the cells of any abbey.

It is a well-known historical fact that many injustices were perpetrated in the dissolution of the smaller monasteries which had been granted to Cardinal Wolsey to make his foundations at Oxford and Ipswich. Amongst others, and unjustly, as it was a cell of a greater house, was St Keveran's, Cornwall, which belonged to Beaulieu. The abbot at the time was Thomas Skeryngton, who was also bishop of Bangor, and he wrote to the Cardinal to protest against the high-handed proceedings of his agents. The property, he says, had been given to the abbey by Richard Earl of Cornwall 400 years before, and it had now been suddenly seized, and he who had taken it wrote to say that "the benefice which is impropriated to Beaulieu he mindeth to give to the finding of scholars." This letter of remonstrance was successful, and Beaulieu kept St Keveran's as part of its possessions till the dissolution.

In the early part of March, 1536, John Browning, abbot of Beaulieu, died, and Thomas Stephens, then abbot of Netley, was elected his successor. This was no sooner done than Netley was suppressed, and all the Netley monks accompanied their abbot to Beaulieu.

On April 2, 1538, Abbot Stephen and twenty monks signed their surrender of Beaulieu to the King. After this came the usual wrecking process. What precious plate and vestments these Cistercian monks possessed is unknown; all indication is lost in the process of collecting these things for the King's use. One solitary example from Beaulieu is all that remains. Amongst the vestments and hangings, etc., which the official appointed to carry out the suppression considered worth sending up to Henry were "three altar frontals."

A few words may be said about the last abbot. In February, 1540, he was instituted to the rectory of Bentworth, near Alton, vacant by the deprivation of John Palmes. It was not without considerable difficulty that "the abbot quondam of Beaulieu" was able to take possession of this benefice. In 1548 Thomas Stephens was collated to the treasurership of Salisbury Cathedral, and he died in 1550, holding both preferments.

CHAPTER V

Buckfast Abbey

ST MARY'S Abbey of Buckfast is beautifully situated in Devonshire, high up on Dartmoor, a few hundred yards from the confluence of the Dart and the Holy Brook. The church measured some 250 feet, but the ravages of the time after the dissolution have left but little trace of the entire mass of buildings, with the exception of a barn and a tower. On the site of the old house quite recently a new monastery of Benedictine monks has risen up, and at the present time another church is being built upon the foundations of that which was swept away in the sixteenth century.

Tradition, which would appear to be well founded, places the establishment of the abbey in the eighth century; and according to some there was here a Christian British settlement dedicated to St Petrock at a very much earlier period. When the light of written records, however, breaks in upon the story of the monastery, we are, indeed, in a very much later period, but with the abbey already in existence.

Until comparatively recent times little was known of Buckfast beyond a charter or two and a somewhat meagre list of abbots. A few years ago, however, among a mass of waste paper and parchment bought by an Exeter mer-

chant from various sources was a fragment of a parchment book, which proved to be part of the Cartulary of Buckfast Abbey. It is, indeed, only a fragment, but it gives much information as to the possessions of the abbey, the names of certain of the abbots not recorded elsewhere, the record of early benefactors and landowners, and incidentally some brief details in the general history of the monastery. The document is to be found printed in the third volume of Bishop Grandisson's *Register* (p. 1563 seqq.) and edited by Prebendary Hingeston-Randolph.

The earliest written record, apparently, states that the monastery was in the possession of "the monks of the order of Savigny," that is, of those who followed the rule of the house founded by Blessed Vitalis of Savigny in 1112, which house, the mother of many daughter monasteries, became identified with the Cistercian movement. The Baron of Totnes Castle, a few miles away down the Dart from Buckfast, appears as one of the early benefactors of that monastery. He came to the Chapter and, with his two sons, "assenting with entire hearts," he gave lands to the Norman monks from Savigny that they might sing daily the "Mary Mass" for the welfare of his own soul and for the soul of Alice his wife, of his ancestors and his posterity. He reserves to himself and his people a right of way to a ford over the Dart, when they should wish to go to market to Ashburton. "The ford," says a modern writer, "has long been disused, but the house above it

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THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF BUCKFAST ABBEY

on the Ashburton side, still bears the name of "Priestaford."

A charter of Henry II, witnessed by Archbishop Theobald and St Thomas Becket, when Chancellor, and confirming all the privileges and grants of land, etc., held by the monastery in the time of Henry I, his grandfather, is the next piece of the written history of Buckfast that has come down to us. Then about the year 1240 a certain Sir Robert de Hellion of Ashton, owning a mansion and lands called Hosefenne, about a mile and a half from the abbey, moved possibly by the austerity of life led by the Cistercian monks of Buckfast, resolved to give them some wine on the great festivals. For this purpose he bestowed this manor of Hosefenne upon "St Mary of Buckfast, and the monks serving God there." In acknowledgement, the religious are to present him and his heirs for ever with a pound of wax on the feast of the Assumption. Out of the revenues of the manor the abbot was to provide his monks yearly with sixty-four gallons of wine, to be drunk on the festivals or Christmas, Candlemas, Whit-Sunday and the Assumption; that is, sixteen gallons on each feast day.

No doubt, had we more documentary history for Buckfast, we should see that the life of the Cistercian monks in their seclusion in Dartmoor was one devoted to the service of God and of His poor in the neighbouring country. The very absence of history may be taken almost as a proof of this. It is the difficulty, the quarrel, the scandal that finds its way into the public

record, whilst days and years of patient service and regular observance are obviously recorded only in the Book of Ages.

The admission of Philip as abbot, on May 21, 1349, in the year of the great pestilence and at a time when it was most rife in Devon, and when all round about the clergy were falling victims to the scourge, suggests that St Mary's, Buckfast, was not spared, and that abbot William Gifford died of the mysterious and prevailing sickness. If so, we may be sure that he was not the only one of his house who was carried off by it; how many victims there were here we shall never know, but probably there were many. At the Cistercian house of Newenham in the same county, for instance, the *Register* records that "in the time of this mortality or pestilence there died in this house twenty monks and three lay brothers, and Walter the abbot and two monks only were left alive there after the sickness." And over and besides these, "no fewer than eighty persons living within the gates" died there.

The last abbot, Gabriel Dunne or Donne, was appointed only a very short time before the suppression of the abbey and not improbably in view of the surrender. At any rate the act was ratified in the Chapter House on February 25, 1538, and Dunne received an annuity of £120 for his consent to the surrender. At the time the number of the monks was much reduced and only nine appear upon the pension list. William Petre, one of the royal commissioners of the dissolution of the

BUCKFAST ABBEY

monasteries, received several manors of the suppressed monastery as his share of the plunder, and the site of the abbey itself became the property of Sir Thomas Dennys, a large sharer in the spoils of the religious houses. To prevent the bells of the abbey church being broken in pieces and sold for the price of the metal, the inhabitants of Buckfastleigh, by Sir Thomas Arundel the King's official, paid £33 15s. for them.

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CHAPTER VI

Bury St Edmund's

THE great Abbey of Bury arose on the spot to which the relics of St Edmund the King were brought for burial after his martyrdom by the Danes in 870. For some time the body lay in the old wooden chapel at Hoxne until its removal, somewhere about 903, to the spot called at that time Beodricsworth, but now known as St Edmund's Bury. In 946 Edmund, son of Edmund the Elder, granted lands to the "keepers of the body," consisting of four priests and two deacons, who were, apparently, members of a body of secular clergy. This college of secular priests, as we may call it, was replaced about A.D. 1020 by Benedictine monks, brought from St Bennet's, Hulme, and from Ely by King Canute. The chief promoter of this change was, apparently, Ælfwin, Bishop of Elmham, who had formerly been a member of the Ely community. A monk named Uvius, who was prior of St Bennet's, became the first abbot, and almost at once, by order of King Canute, the existing wooden church was pulled down and replaced by one of stone. This was dedicated by Agelnoth, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1032.

The position for the new monastery was well chosen.

What remains of the monastic buildings may now be seen on some low ground, protected by a hill covered by the houses of the town and bounded on the south by some rich meadow land, bordering the little river Linnet, which, flowing eastward, here joins the river Lark and continues its course together with it towards the Ouse and the North Sea. At the confluence of these two small rivers stands a bridge of the thirteenth century, with a curious arrangement for a wooden passage, which has its history. Along it, in the days gone by, the sick and infirm were able to pass over the flowing stream in order to enjoy the shadow of the vines planted along the sunny river bank; to the east, on the rising ground, signs of the terraced vineyard are still clearly apparent.

The actual remains of the church, once 505 feet in length, of the great cloisters, and of the vast monastic buildings are very scanty. Chief amongst the actual existing ruins is the tower, 86 feet high, formerly the great gate of the cemetery. It stands exactly opposite to the spot where the great western door of the church was, and it is still in good preservation. Of the rest some high masses of flint and mortar, from which the stone casing has been cut away, are all that remains of one of the finest establishments in the land. Somewhat further to the north is the church of St James, built as a parochial church by the monks in the twelfth century, and further on again, there still stands the beautiful decorated gateway built in the period

from 1327-40. Within it the remains of the abbot's house are not inconsiderable, but of the extensive western front, with its great central tower and its two lower octagonal towers, which in size and beauty must have rivalled the front of Ely, nothing whatever is now left. When Leland saw this church in the day of its magnificence, with two noble parish churches as it were supporting it and, by contrast, showing off its immense proportions, and with its six smaller chapels standing within the precincts, he exclaimed: "The sun hath not shone on a goodlier abbey, whether a man indifferently consider either the endowment with revenues or the largeness or the incomparable magnificence thereof. He that saw it would say, verily, that it was a city, so many gates are there in it, and some of brass, and so many towers and a most stately church, upon which attend three others also, standing gloriously in one and the same churchyard, all of passing fine and curious workmanship."

Such was the great abbey in the day of its magnificence: to this it was slowly and painfully built up during the five hundred years of its existence. The first abbot was succeeded by Leofstan, another of the monks who had come as founders from Hulme, and it was during the time of his abbacy that Edward the Confessor visited the shrine of St Edmund on more than one occasion. At these times, out of veneration for the saintly King and martyr, Edward was wont to perform the last mile of his journey on foot like an

BURY ST. EDMUND'S: THE ABBEY GATEWAY

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ordinary pilgrim. Upon the death of Leofstan the favour of the Confessor procured the election of Baldwin, a monk of St Denis and his own physician, and the convent had no reason to regret their compliance with the King's suggestion. Even after the Conquest this learned abbot continued in high favour with William. He was always well received at Court, and the King kept him for long periods near his person as a friend and adviser.

Towards the close of his life Abbot Baldwin saw that the church built by Canute was hardly adequate for the more modern requirements, when the abbey had already grown in size and importance. He determined, therefore, to begin the building of a noble church, and so quickly did the work proceed that he completed what was considered one of the most wonderful churches of its age in 1095. The same year the body of St Edmund was translated to its new shrine with great pomp, on April 29, in the presence of a vast concourse of people. Within a year Abbot Baldwin died and, as William Rufus then reigned over England, the monks were left for some time before they could obtain permission to elect a successor. Even when Henry I came to the throne, in 1100, the royal will imposed upon the monks as abbot a son of the Earl of Chester, who had been a monk of Evrault, in Normandy. It was really a bad case of the obvious abuse by which a religious superior could be placed over a community by the secular power, and after two years

this utterly unworthy and incapable man was deposed by St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury. A monk of Westminster was thereupon chosen by the religious, and though for five years the King refused to recognize him, this time of contention appears to have been both prosperous and useful to the monastery. The abbot of their choice built the refectory, the dormitory, the chapter house and abbot's quarters, and in 1107, the royal opposition having apparently been overcome, he was blessed by St Anselm. He, however, lived only for a year afterwards.

During the last portion of the twelfth century Edmundsbury was ruled by the well-known abbot Samson, who was elected 1182. He is probably the best known of the whole line of abbots, through the charming chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond, which inspired Carlyle's *Past and Present*. The account of his presentation to the King, as given by the annalist, is most picturesque. "Then Samson was nominated in the presence of the King," he says, "and when the King had consulted with his men for a while, all were summoned, and the King said, 'You have presented to me Samson. I know him not. If you had presented your prior to me, I would have accepted him, for I have seen and known him. But I will only do what you will. Take heed to yourselves; by the true eyes of God, if you do ill I will enact a recompense at your hands.'

"Then he asked the prior if he assented to the choice and wished it, and the prior answered that he

did will it and that Samson was worthy of much greater honour. Therefore he was elected, and fell at the King's feet and embraced them. Then he arose quickly and hastened to the altar, with his head erect and without changing his expression, chanting the *Miserere mei, Deus* with the brothers.

"And when the King saw this, he said to those that stood by, 'By the eyes of God, this elect thinks he is worthy to rule the abbey.'"

Samson ruled for thirty years, in which, whilst dealing always justly, strictly and firmly but with every kindness, he won the admiration and affection of his monks. Carlyle sketches him for us as "the substantial figure of a man with eminent nose, bushy brows and clear-flashing eyes, his russet beard growing daily greyer," and his hair, which before his elevation to the abbot's chair had been black, becoming daily more and more silvered with his many cares. Of cares he had plenty, because the finances of the house had fallen into very low water indeed, and there was apparently no means of extricating the abbey from the clutches of the money-lenders. But Samson set his heart and soul to the task; not prematurely attempting anything at once, but studying the situation with care and patience, and then, when he had grasped what was to be known, determining upon the remedy. When he came to die in 1211, he was followed to the grave by a sorrowing community whose unstinted reverence he had won. The unknown monk of the abbey, who was the author of another chronicle in continuation of

Jocelin's, thus records his death: "On the 30th December, at St Edmund's, died Samson, of pious memory, the venerable abbot of that place, after he had prosperously ruled the abbey committed to him for thirty years and had freed it from a load of debt, had enriched it with privileges, liberties, possessions and spacious buildings, and had restored the worship of the church both internally and externally, in the most ample manner. Then bidding his last farewell to his sons, by whom the blessed man deserved to be blessed for evermore, whilst they were all standing by and gazing with awe at a death which was a cause for admiration, not for regret, in the fourth year of the interdict he rested in peace."

Samson was succeeded by Hugh de Northwold, who, in 1228, became bishop of Ely. The King had kept the abbatial property in his hands for a whole year before allowing the community to proceed to an election, and even when the leave came difficulties arose about the "free choice" of the monks which caused further delays, and it was not until March 10, 1215, that the question was decided in Hugh de Northwold's favour. Even then the difficulties were not at an end, and it was only on June 9 that he was received by the King to do homage. By this time, however, he had already been blessed by Archbishop Langton on May 17. The Archbishop had thought that in view of the *commotio*, which had arisen between the King and the barons, it was necessary that the abbot of St Edmundsbury should be blessed without delay, and so

THE ABBOT'S BRIDGE, BURY ST. EDMUNDS

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put himself in a position to act with other ecclesiastics with full abbatial power should events so demand. It was on May 17, after his benediction at Rochester, that the news came from London that the city had fallen into the hands of the barons; and when the King consented to receive the abbot on June 10, he did so "in Staine's Meadow," or Runnymead, where the discussions were already in progress between the King and his barons, which issued in the granting and proclamation of the Great Charter. Hugh de Northwold, the bishop, died in 1254; and the historian, Matthew of Paris, who must have known him well, calls him *flos nigrorum monachorum*, "the flower of the Black monks," and adds that as he had been known as an abbot among abbots, so also he shone brightly as a bishop among bishops.

On the elevation of Hugh to the See of Ely in 1228, Richard de Insula or Ely was chosen in his place. He had been prior of Edmundsbury and for seven years had been abbot of Burton before he was chosen to succeed Hugh de Northwold. He celebrated his installation on St Edmund's Day, in the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the bishop of Ely and many other ecclesiastics and peers.

It is unnecessary to follow in detail the succession of the various abbots who ruled over the destinies of Bury during the succeeding centuries. In the thirteenth century great difficulty and not a few serious misunderstandings were experienced by the coming of the

Franciscan friars to the town. They established themselves there not only without the leave but in spite of the opposition of the monks, and through the support of the Earl of Gloucester and the Queen they maintained themselves in the position of opposition they had taken up for nearly six years. Finally, under a rescript of Pope Urban IV in November 1263, their removal to Babwell, a site granted to them by the monks, was effected.

During the reigns of Edward I and Edward II the affairs of the abbey would appear to have been sufficiently prosperous. It was then that the mansion for the reception of royal guests was provided by the monks. It is, indeed, remarkable how frequent during the history of the monastery were the visits of royal personages, and it has been said that "no shrine ever drew so many noble pilgrims and crowned visitors." Besides those already mentioned, Henry I came, in 1132, to return thanks for his preservation during a great storm whilst at sea; Richard Cœur de Lion, in 1189, was at Bury to ask for God's blessing on going to war against the Saracens; and again, in 1194, on his return to offer the rich standards of Isaac, King of Cyprus. In 1204 King John visited the abbey, hardly, perhaps, so much as a pilgrim as to ask for the loan of the jewels with which his mother, Queen Eleanor, had decked the shrine of the martyr-king. Henry III was twice at Bury as a pilgrim, in 1251 and 1272; Edward I and his Queen came in 1289 and also in 1292

and 1294; Edward II in 1326; Richard III in 1383; Henry VI in 1433, 1436, 1446 and 1448; Edward IV in 1469; and Henry VII in 1486. In 1272 and again in 1296 a Parliament was held at the abbey.

In 1327 the then abbot, Thomas de Braughton, witnessed the almost total destruction of the abbey by the townspeople of Edmundsbury. Many matters concerning the rights of the monastery and the liberties of the people had long been in debate between the convent and the town, when suddenly, headed by the aldermen and burgesses, the people made repeated armed attacks upon the monastery and its possessions. They sacked and burned the monastic buildings and robbed the abbey of its ornaments, charters and treasures. They took the prior, Peter de Clopton, and some twenty monks to the chapter house and there forced them to sign documents subversive of the rights and privileges of the abbey, besides bonds promising to pay large sums of money to the insurgent tenants and to free them from debt. The people held the monastery by force for ten months, continually burning and destroying, so that when in the end the sheriff, with the King's soldiers, came to its relief it is said that the monks' common room was the only place left with a roof on it in which to stable the horses. After prolonged litigation, the convent was awarded £140,000 for damages, but, at the instance of the King, the whole was remitted except 2,000 marks, to be paid at the rate of 100 marks a year. One account states

that those who had been outlawed plotted a revenge. Waiting their time, they seized the abbot at his manor at Charington and, having bound him, shaved his head and beard and carried him away with them to London. Here they kept their prisoner in secret, removing him from house to house, till they got a chance to convey him over the Thames into Kent and thence later over the sea into Brabant, where they held him captive, "in much misery and slavery," till he was rescued by his friends.

The celebration of the Christmas of 1433 by King Henry VI at St Edmundsbury affords us, in the details that have come down to us, a good picture of the greatness and resources of the abbey at this period of its existence. On All Saints' Day, 1433, the King had publicly announced his intention of spending the time from Christmas to St George's Day at the abbey. Preparations were immediately begun by the monks, and the royal lodgings or "palace," as the record calls it, having been found in an indifferent state of repair, eighty workmen were at once engaged to set it in order and decorate it.

From among his own numerous dependents Abbot Curteys found no difficulty in appointing a sufficient suite to wait upon the King, and he arranged, says the record, for a hundred officers of every rank to attend on Henry during his stay. He summoned the aldermen and the chief people of Bury to discuss how and in what dress it was proper to receive their King,

and after much talk it was concluded that the aldermen and burgesses should wear their scarlet gowns and the rest be content with red cloth and hoods of blood colour. On Christmas Eve, consequently, the aldermen, burgesses and townsfolk, to the number of five hundred, in their gorgeous robes, set out on horseback to meet King Henry at Newmarket Heath and bring him into Bury.

It is no very difficult task to picture to the imagination the vast court of the abbey on that occasion, crowded with the inhabitants of the town and the people from the neighbouring villages, all eager to get a glimpse of their sovereign. As rumours heralded the approach of the gay cavalcade, the great western doors of the abbey church—works of beaten bronze, cunningly chiselled by the skilful hands of Master Hugh, and inspired perchance by what Abbot Anselm, nephew of the sainted archbishop, had himself seen at Monte Cassino—were thrown open. Forth issued the community, some sixty or seventy in number, all vested in precious copes over their habits, and following the cross and candles and preceding their abbot in full pontificals, with whom on this occasion walked Bishop Alnwick of Norwich, an honoured guest. Then the ranks of vested monks opened on either side and through them bishop and abbot advanced to meet their youthful sovereign, whereupon the Earl of Warwick, quickly alighting, assisted the King to dismount. Henry at once advanced towards the procession and kneeling

upon a silken cloth was first sprinkled with holy water by the abbot, and was then presented with the crucifix to be reverently kissed by him.

The procession then turned to re-enter the church. The building was large enough to accommodate even so large a crowd as was that day assembled. From end to end the western front stretched for nearly 250 feet; within, an unbroken length of over 500 feet met the eye. The massive Norman architecture of A.D. 1112, was relieved by the painted vaulting—that of the choir by the monk "Dom John Wodecroft, the King's painter," in the days of Abbot John I de Norwold (1279-1301), that of the nave to match, executed in the taste of the fourteenth century at the expense of the sacrist, John Lavenham (c. 1370), who during his term of office had spent something like £50,000 of our money on beautifying the church. The new lantern tower above the choir was his work, and so too were the clerestory windows round the sanctuary: the painted glass in the windows in the southern side of the minster were the gift of King Edward III to the church of St Edmund.

After visiting the Blessed Sacrament at the High Altar, the King passed out of the sight of the people by one of the doors in the altar screen, which had been adorned with paintings by the care of Bishop Bromfield. These doorways led into the feretory beyond the screen, in which was the shrine of the sainted King and martyr. This priceless work of art rested on a base of Gothic stonework, and was itself covered

with plates of gold enriched with every kind of jewel. King John every year of his reign bestowed ten marks on the work of beautifying the shrine, and among the stones which sparkled on it were a great and precious sapphire and a ruby of great size, two of his special gifts. On the right side, too, was the golden cross set with many jewels surmounting a flaming carbuncle, the rich gift of Henry Lacy, the last Earl of Lincoln of that name, whilst a second golden cross from the same benefactor formed the apex of the shrine.

On the east, at the head of the shrine, two small columns supported a smaller shrine containing the relics of Leostan, the second abbot of Bury, whilst on the western side at the foot of the shrine was placed the altar of the Holy Cross. Above the whole stretched a canopy, which Prior Lavenham had adorned with painted pictures. At the four corners were the great waxen torches which burned before the shrine day and night, and were paid for by the rent of a Norfolk manor, left for the purpose by King Richard II.

It is impossible within limits to follow in detail the story of Henry's Christmas visit to Edmundsbury. It will, perhaps, be possible, however, to say something about the treasures which must have existed at this time in the abbey vestry and which have, alas! now all disappeared. Unfortunately we have no inventory of St Edmundsbury, but a slight anecdote makes us understand what it must have been. In Abbot Samson's time a monk called Walter de Diss was appointed to

the responsible office of sacrist. After four days' experience in the office he came and asked to be relieved, saying that since his appointment he had never closed his eyes and could neither rest nor sleep.

Doubtless, like St Albans, Glastonbury and elsewhere, Bury possessed large sets of vestments, including ten, thirty or even sixty copes. The fragmentary notices which remain afford at all events some idea of that of which all exact record is lost. For example, here is a cope "woven with gold" and a precious chasuble given by Abbot Samson himself; here is a chasuble adorned with gold and precious stones and a cope of the same given by Abbot Hugh de Northwold, afterwards bishop of Ely. Then, in one press are kept the precious copes, the silken hangings and other ornaments provided by Abbot Richard I (1229-1234); then in another are the set of fifty copes and other things thereto belonging (that is, doubtless, albs, apparels, etc.), which prior John Gosford had done so much to acquire. Then, to name only one or two more instances, there were the vestments obtained at a cost of over £200 by John Lavenham; the vestment *bloden cum botherflies de satyn* given to St Edmund by Edmund Bokenham, chaplain to King Edward III; the embroidered cope of prior William de Rokeland; the precious cope bought for over £40 by Prior Edmund de Brundish; the sumptuous embroidered cope given by Henry Lacy, Earl of Lincoln.

Of the plate, the most precious piece was doubtless

the great chalice of gold, weighing nearly fourteen marks, the gift of Eleanor, Queen of Henry II. It was a chalice with a history, for it had been given by the community as its contribution towards the ransom of King Richard I. Queen Eleanor, the King's mother, however, paid its value and subsequently restored it to Edmundsbury on condition that it should never again be alienated, as she says in her charter, and that it was to be preserved for ever, a memorial of her son Richard. Besides this there was another chalice of fine gold procured by the sacrist Hugh; a cross of gold given by the Abbot Samson; a third golden cross, another present of Henry Lacy, and set with precious stones to render it more worthy as a reliquary for a piece of the Holy Cross. The same generous benefactor gave a cup which was much prized at Bury. It was a bowl of silver gilt, of the most wonderful and ancient workmanship, which the donor asserted had belonged to St Edmund himself. This cup, on great days, the chaplain of the shrine, wearing a surplice, was wont to offer to the most dignified guests keeping the holiday in the abbey.

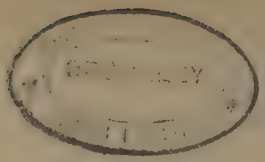
Abbot Curteys, who entertained the youthful King Henry at this Christmas of 1432, was himself the giver of a great work of art, a pastoral staff, which from what we know of it, must have done honour to the English workman who made it. It was ordered by Abbot Curteys in 1430, and John Horwell, the goldsmith of London who made it, pledged himself to have it ready for All Saints' Day of the same year. In

the crook were figured two scenes, on the one side the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, on the other the Annunciation; below the springing of the curve was a richly ornamented niche enshrining the figure of St Edmund, whilst below this again and forming the summit of the staff were twelve canopies each containing one of the Apostles. The weight of this precious pastoral crook was 12lbs 9½ozs, and it cost the abbot £40 in money of those days.

A mere glance at the treasury of any single abbey may afford some idea of the devastation which took place in the sixteenth century. Of the wonderful works of art gathered together at Edmundsbury during centuries of corporate existence nothing whatever is known to exist; the destruction was complete. No wonder the commissioners of Henry VIII could write of Bury: "We have found a rich shryne which was very cumbrous to deface," and that although they had "taken in the said monastery in gold and silver 5,000 marks and above, over and besides a rich cross with emeralds, as also divers and sundry stones of great value, they had left the house well furnished" for a further spoliation. No wonder that Camden in his lamenting over the ruin of this great house could write: "Greater loss than this, so far as the works of man go, England never suffered."

The visitation of Edmundsbury in 1535 by ApRice, Crumwell's agent, is a very good example of the kind of work these men did. ApRice's letter states that they

could find out nothing from the religious "although we did use much diligence," and he therefore concludes "that they had confederated and compacted before our coming that they should disclose nothing." Nevertheless, in the paper of charges sent with the letter the royal commissioners do not hesitate to bracket nine of the monks together as guilty of immoralities, and to suggest the same against the abbot. Edmundsbury, however, was, of course, one of the greater abbeys, which subsequently to this report the King declared in Parliament to be in a good and religious state. The end came on November 4, 1539, when, after vainly striving to stave off the destruction of his house, Abbot Melford was compelled to resign his charge into the King's hands. He received a pension and retired into a small house at the top of Crown Street, Bury, where he shortly afterwards died, of grief, it is said, at the calamity which had overwhelmed his house and Order.



CHAPTER VII

Crowland

CROWLAND, or Croyland, is described by William of Malmesbury as one of the islands in the great tract of fen or marshland a hundred miles in length, which stretches from the middle of England to the eastern sea. The ruins of the abbey stand about half-way between Peterborough and Spalding, on the banks of the river Welland, which drains off much of the water of this district into the Wash, fifty miles away. In this spot early in the eighth century there settled a youth of high family, named Guthlac, who having renounced the profession of arms, desired to live a secluded life amid the solitude of the Lincolnshire fens. Shortly after his death, Ethelwold, King of the Mercians, determined to fulfil here his promise to build a monastery, and in 716 he sent for Kenulph, a monk of Evesham, to begin the foundation.

This was the commencement of Benedictine Crowland, and, if we can believe Ethelbald's charter as given in Ingulph's Chronicle, the King gave £300 towards the buildings of the abbey and promised £100 a year more for ten years to come. He had granted the monks the entire island; but as it was small and the land very insecure, he caused an innumerable quantity of oaks and

alders to be driven into the marshy ground round about the island as piles, and in order to fill up the ground he had earth brought from Upland, nine miles away. In this way the ground was made sufficiently solid to support the stone buildings, which at once began to arise in the fenland.

In 870 the Danes ravaged the whole country, and having defeated Earl Algar's army pursued the survivors to the very door of the monastery at Crowland. The community hastily retired, carrying off in a box the body of their patron St Guthlac with his psalter and whip, which is called elsewhere St Bartholomew's whip and is represented on the arms of the abbey, and hid them in Ancarig Wood where there was an hermitage. The plate and altarpiece were then let down into the well of the cloister; but the latter, which was much prized as being the gift of King Witlaf fifty years before, and which possibly may have been "the golden veil embroidered with the fall of Troy" specially spoken of, would not sink and was handed over to the charge of the abbot and some seniors. Thirty monks remained behind in the monastery and continued to carry out their duties as before, until just as Mass was over the Danes broke into the church where they were. Oskitel, the Danish king, murdered the abbot with his own hands, and the rest of the monks were tortured to make them reveal the place where the church treasure was hidden, and as they refused they were put to death in various places of the establishment. Asker, the prior,

for instance, was slaughtered in the sacristy; Lethwyn, the sub-prior, in the refectory, and one only of their number, Turgar, a boy of ten years was spared. All the tombs were broken open in the hopes of discovering the buried treasures, which, however, were not found. Being disappointed of their object, the barbarians laid the bodies of the murdered monks in a heap and setting fire to them burnt as their funeral pyre the church and monastic buildings on August 28, 870, three days after their arrival at Crowland.

After leaving the abbey the Danes set fire to Medeshamsted Abbey, now known as Peterborough. In the confusion caused by an accident to some heavily laden wagons the boy Turgar escaped, and returning to Crowland found that the monks who had gone to Ancarig had come back and were vainly endeavouring to extinguish the fire which was slowly comsuming their monastery. Their first business, on learning of the death of their abbot and prior, was to choose a new superior, and one of their number, Godric, was unanimously elected to the office of abbot. He was almost at once called upon to assist in removing the ruins of Medeshamsted, and when doing so he erected a pyramidical cross over the bodies of eighty-four monks, who had perished in that monastery at the hands of the Danes.

As most of this history and indeed most of the story of Crowland depends upon the Chronicle of Ingulph, now admitted to be a composition of the fifteenth cen-

CROWLAND ABBEY

tury, it must, of course, be received with some caution, although it no doubt gives the traditional account of the destruction of the abbey and its gradual restoration in the time before the Norman conquest. In 1076 the Conqueror made Ingulph abbot of his monastery at Crowland, and at the time he took possession of his charge he found sixty-two monks, of whom four were lay brothers. Besides this there are said to have been actually in residence there more than a hundred monks of other monasteries, who were called *comprofessi*, who came and went apparently as they liked. When there, they had a seat in the refectory, a stall in the church, and a bed in the common dormitory. These monks, belonging to various destroyed monasteries, apparently made Crowland a place of refuge in difficult days. At this time—A.D. 1076—of the *comprofessi* in the house, ten were from Thorney, six from Peterborough, eight from Ramsey, nine from St Edmundsbury, ten from Westminster, fifteen from Thetford, fourteen from Christ Church, Norwich, etc.

In 1091 a fire, of which Ingulph gives a vivid account, broke out and destroyed most of the church and monastery. It was caused by the negligence of the proverbial plumber, who had left the ashes of his fire to smoulder after doing some lead work on the tower. To repair this great misfortune the friends and patrons of the abbey came forward with such generosity that Ingulph, before his death in 1109, was enabled to see much of the monastery restored and preparations made

for rebuilding the church, over the blackened ruins of which a temporary roof had been placed. In 1114 the first stone of the new church was laid at the east angle, and various people of rank laid other stones, placing money upon them or grants of stone or wood. The foundations were laid upon massive piles of oak, and many labourers came forward to assist in the work of raising a worthy temple to God, without other reward than that of the satisfaction of taking part in the great work. Five thousand people were present at the feast of the dedication; this assembly included two abbots, two earls, two barons and 500 guests in the great halls. The rest were entertained in the cloister garth.

During the wars between the houses of Lancaster and York Henry VI came to Crowland in 1460 and remained there for three days. Some time after, on an alarm that the Northern army was marching upon that part of the country, the cloisters and buildings generally were filled to overflowing with household goods of all kinds brought in from the country round about. In 1467 Edward IV also visited Crowland and together with 200 horsemen was entertained by the abbot.

The Perpendicular north-west tower was built in the fifteenth century in the ten years between 1460-70. The beautiful early English sculpture of the legend of St Guthlac on the west front was substituted by Abbot Ralph de la March (1255-1281) for a por-

BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM
BROCKLEY

THE ABBOT'S BRIDGE: CROWLAND

tion which had been blown down by a great storm; the upper part, which had seven tiers of canopied images, and the great west window were finished in 1380. In January, 1470, Abbot Litlington gave five bells to the tower, which was begun in 1427. The nave clerestory, built without any triforium in 1405, must have been imposing; it is now a ruin. The monastery buildings lay to the south of the present remains; on the west of the abbey court were the granaries and bakehouse built by John de Wisbech about 1470; on the south stood the lesser guest house; on the east the tailor's and other shops and offices and the hall of the lay brothers; on the north was the main gateway and the almonry The infirmary was apparently south-east of the church and "the great guest hall on the west of the cloister has an undercroft of three alleys."

Crowland, like most of "the great and solemn abbeys" of England, came into the hands of Henry VIII in 1539. The site of the monastery soon passed away out of the King's hands; and the ruin of the buildings would have been even more complete than it now appears, had not the inhabitants purchased "the south aisle of the church" for £26 and at the same time given £30 for two of the old bells, to save them from being broken up by the royal workmen.

The last abbot was John Briggs or Bridges, and a subsequent examination of one of the dispossessed monks, who "was his confessor and one of his execu-

tors," shows us the old man dying away from his ancient home, and pestered with questions about some plate which he had been allowed to keep and which was in "a spruce coffer by his bedside," when he was breathing his last a few years after the ruin of his old home. He was the end of the long line of abbots of Crowland.

CHAPTER VIII

Evesham

THE Benedictine abbey of Evesham was in ancient days the glory of the fruitful valley in which it stood. Leland calls the place the *horreum*, the granary of Worcestershire, and a modern writer, who had seen the country in spring, white with the apple and cherry blossom and in the autumn golden with the hop flower, spoke of it as "an Eden of fertility." Here, at a spot where the Avon, making a sudden sweep round, describes more than two parts of a circle, on the peninsula thus formed, stands to-day the town of Evesham, which owes its existence to the abbey founded in the year 701 for monks of the Benedictine Order.

Although there remain but few traces of the original buildings, in the height of its glory Evesham with its towers and turrets, with its church 270 feet long and its numerous chapels, with its cloisters and gables, was one of the largest churches and must have been one of the finest monastic establishments in the country. The Norman gateway of the precincts, part of Abbot Reginald's enclosure wall, a portion of the old almonry with its stone lantern, above all the Great Tower, built or finished by Clement Lichfield in the sixteenth

century, and the arch of the Chapter House, built in 1317, are all that have been preserved of the vast range of buildings. The rest was pulled to the ground and swept away at the dissolution so entirely and so immediately, that even in 1540, two years only after the event, Leland could describe it as "gone, a mere heap of rubbish." The beautiful tower, 117 feet high, was only saved from this same dire destruction by the people of the town, who purchased it from the wreckers.

The story or legend of Evesham goes back a long way. About the year 701, St Egwin, the third bishop of the See of Worcester, founded the monastery and dedicated it to the Blessed Virgin Mary in response to a vision which he had, and in which Our Lady is said to have instructed him where to place the new foundation. With the name of the founder, Egwin, there is connected a somewhat strange legend, which has no doubt grown in the telling from some fact which at first was easily to be explained. The saint was twice in Rome, and in the spirit of penance so common in those far-off days, on one of his journeys, he is said to have locked fetters on his legs and to have thrown the key into the Worcestershire Avon. This may, of course, have been the case, but the story certainly tests the credulity of modern days when it goes on to say that inside a fish caught in the Tiber was found the same key by which the fetters were removed from Bishop Egwin's legs in Rome.

The second visit Egwin paid to Rome was in com-

EVESHAM ABBEY

BROCKLEY

pany with King Kenred and King Offa, who had already proved themselves great benefactors to Evesham. This was in 708, and it will be remembered that the two monarchs whilst in Rome renounced their crowns and took the monastic habit in the Eternal City. St Egwin on his return, following their example, gave up his See of Worcester and became first abbot of the new monastery of Evesham. A succession of eighteen Saxon abbots followed, of whom little more is known than their names, and in the uncertain times of the tenth century the regular life seems to have ceased, and the monks appear to have given place to secular priests living a sort of common life together. Whether this was the case or no is difficult to determine in the absence of records, but in 960 St Ethelwold certainly appears to have restored the monks by command of King Edgar.

The last abbot of the Saxon line was Egilwin, or Agelwy as he is sometimes called, who succeeded to the abbacy on the resignation of Abbot Maunus through ill health in 1058. Egilwin won for himself the friendship and respect of William the Conqueror, and ruled the abbey until 1077, dying before he was able to carry out his desire of rebuilding the church at Evesham, which then stood in great need of repair. It was in 1074, during his abbacy, that Aldwin of Winchelcombe, together with Alfwy, a deacon of Evesham, and a brother named Reinfrid, set out from Worcestershire to restore some of the monasteries of

Northumbria which had been rendered desolate by the Danes. The story may be seen in Simeon of Durham's *History*, and it there appears that these three monks took with them from Evesham only the necessary books and vestments for Office and Mass, which formed the burden of one ass. The result was all that could be wished for, and their mission led to the revival of the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, of Whitby and of Lastingham, from which last named sprung St Mary's Abbey at York. The connexion of Evesham with this great Benedictine house in the North was perpetuated by the special union, which ever existed between them, and which, in the words of the annalist, made Evesham and St Mary's to be "as one body and one church."

In 1077 William the Conqueror appointed the first Norman abbot, who at once commenced the building of the church towards which his Saxon predecessor had left behind him "five chests full of money." This treasure not proving sufficient, Abbot Walter is said to have despatched some of his monks round about England on a collecting tour, with the shrine of St Egwin. This journey produced a considerable sum and enabled him to finish the work.

Abbot Walter was succeeded, in the reign of William Rufus, by Robert, a monk of Jumièges in Normandy, and during the time of his rule, about 1100, an offshoot of twelve monks was sent over to Denmark to found a Benedictine monastery there. This was un-

dertaken at the request of the King, Eric the Good, and of a bishop named Hubald, who was himself an Englishman and a Benedictine. Twelve monks departed from Evesham in response to this demand and were established at Odensee, which always recognized its dependence on the parent house in England and to the end continued to preserve constant intercourse with it.

An interesting document of about this same period, preserved in the *Register* of the abbey, affords us some information as to the number of monks at Evesham and about the officials employed in the administration. There were then sixty-seven monks belonging to the abbey, including the twelve in Denmark, five nuns, three poor people "for the maundy," and three clerics having the same position as the monks. The number of the servants of the abbey was sixty-five, of whom five served in the church, two in the infirmary, two in the chancery, five in the kitchen, seven in the bake-house, four in the brewery; four attended the baths, two were shoemakers, two were in the pantry, three were gardeners; one attended at the gate of the close, two at the great gate; five worked in the vineyard, four were fishermen, four waited in the abbot's chamber, three waited in the hall, four attended on the monks when they went abroad, and two were watchmen.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries at Evesham were periods of building and reconstruction. With the exception of one abbot, Roger Norreis, a Canterbury monk, who had been forced upon the religious by the

King, and who proving himself worthy of their suspicions had to be deposed by the Pope, most of the abbots were members of their own house and ruled well, ever adding something to the glories of Evesham. Of all the rest perhaps the name of Thomas de Marleberge, who held the office from 1229 to 1236, deserves to be best remembered, not only as a builder of the walls of both church and monastery, but as a decorator of the existing buildings, and as a great collector of books for the monastic library.

The end came to Evesham in the sixteenth century as to the rest of the religious houses. A chance survival of the Latin Letter Book of a monk of the monastery, who was also a master in the Benedictine college at Oxford, shows that studies were in no wise neglected at Evesham at the close of the long centuries of its history. The abbot Clement Lichfield, who was elected in 1513, after disbursing large sums to Henry VIII, to Wolsey and to Crumwell, in the hope of propitiating them, resigned his office in 1538 rather than surrender his abbey to the King. He had built the ornate tower which still survives as his monument, and had added two chapels of considerable beauty to the churches of St Lawrence and of All Saints in the town. He was succeeded by Philip Hawford or Ballard, who was appointed in order that he might surrender his abbey and its possessions into the King's hands; and consequently on November 17, 1539, he and his community gave over their property in a deed of surrender to the royal offi-

cials. Amongst the names of those who are enrolled as members of the community in that document is that of John Feckenham. This monk subsequently became abbot of Westminster, when that foundation was restored in Queen Mary's reign, and amongst those to whom he gave the Benedictine habit during the brief period of the renewed religious life at Westminster was one Sigebert Buckley. Half a century later, whilst a prisoner for his religious convictions in the London prison of the Gatehouse, Buckley clothed two priests with the habit, and thence it is through Evesham that the present English Benedictines claim an unbroken line of succession from those who came to England with St Augustine.

Two years after the suppression of the monastery, Clement Throgmorton, the royal receiver, sets down the total receipts from the property at Evesham at £1,521 1s. 10d. with £70 arrears. He had paid the pensions of the abbot, the quondam abbot and thirty-two monks as well as an annuity to "the instructor of the boys," which was £10. At various times £400 had been paid to the Crown from the receipts of the Evesham dissolved monastery.

CHAPTER IX

Furness

ON the peninsula which stretches out into the sands and seas of Morecombe Bay in Lancashire stands what remains of Furness Abbey. Only a few miles away on the sea coast, so close, indeed, that the bustle and noise of its ever-clamorous iron foundries can almost be heard in the silent ruins, is Barrow. The contrast between the two places is obvious and complete: the one is a memorial of a bygone age; of the dead past of a life of seclusion; of calm study, and, above all, of prayer. It is a record of an intense belief in the unseen world, and in the intimate connexion of the future life with the present, the supernatural with the natural. The other, Barrow, is the type of modern enterprise, modern ways, and even of modern beliefs; in place of quiet and repose there is noise and bustle, and little time or place for supernatural ideals amid the perpetual present reality of work, work, work, where men are ever being ground to lifeless and soulless masses of humanity in the great money-making machines of the vast iron industry.

The monastery of Furness was first founded in 1124 by King Stephen before he had come to the Throne of England. The monks were Benedictines from Savigny

in France, and they were first located at a place called Tulketh, near Preston. They moved, however, in 1127 to Furness, which was then called Benkangsgill, or "the valley of the deadly nightshade." A poem written by one of the monks in a later age connects the place-name with a legend telling how the coming of the monks rendered the poison of the plants harmless.

In the time of Peter of York, the fourth abbot of Furness, Serlo, the abbot of Savigny, which was the mother house of Furness, joined the Cistercian movement, and submitted himself in all things to St Bernard. Abbot Peter of York and his English community were at first unwilling to change their habit, which up to this had been that of the Black Benedictines, and he personally journeyed to Rome and obtained from Pope Eugenius III a declaration that the Abbey of Furness should always remain in the Order in which it was established, notwithstanding that the mother house had joined the Cistercians.

Matters were so far apparently settled when Abbot Peter was persuaded—*captus* (taken) is the word of the chronicle—by the monks of Savigny to pay a visit to that house on his way back to his monastery. When they had got him at Savigny, he was induced to resign his abbatial office and become a monk to receive training in the Cistercian system. He succeeded so well that later on he was appointed abbot of the Cistercian house of Quarre, in the Isle of Wight. Meanwhile, Richard, a learned doctor and a monk of Savigny, was sent over

to Furness as abbot. In a very short time, by his teaching and example, this Abbot Richard had won over the community to the new union; they again acknowledged the abbey of Savigny as their mother house, and in a brief time had become part of the Cistercian Order.

Furness gradually became possessed of great landed property. Besides the large peninsula on which it was situated, and which it owned practically in its entirety, it had lands and possessions in numerous counties of England. It is said, indeed, that in the reign of Edward I its revenue was estimated at £18,000 of our money. The enclosure wall of the monastery surrounded sixty-three acres, and there are many remains of the old buildings to prove their extent. The present hotel is said to have been the abbot's lodging. Of the church, the arch, 60 feet in height, on the east of the crossing, remains; the late Perpendicular tower at the west end is 17 feet square, and was built within the late Norman nave, which has aisles and is 160 feet long and 65 feet broad. The transepts are 129 feet across, and have eastern chapels. The choir extends two bays into the nave, and the sanctuary still retains the platform of the altar, a sedilia of five canopies, and aumbries. In the wall of the south transept may yet be seen the dormitory stairs used by the monks when coming to the night office. The domestic buildings are of a date early in the thirteenth century. On the west side of the cloister was a vaulted crypt of the guest house; on the east is the Chapter House 60 feet in length,

FURNESS ABBEY

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and the parlour and cloister aumbry. On either side of the Chapter House, entered by two doorways, is the common room, with a fireplace in it. It is 50 feet long, and is of fourteen bays, having the dormitory above it.

Furness apparently went on in the even tenor of its ways, without making history in the usual sense of the word, from the time of its foundation till the sixteenth century. It had at all times, apparently, a large community, and beyond the thirty choir monks, which was the number constantly maintained, it sent out several colonies to make new foundations. Thus Calder Abbey was its first daughter-house in 1134, in which same year it established Rushin Abbey in the Isle of Man. Fifty years later it colonized Swineshead, but after this time these offshoots were discouraged by the Cistercian General Chapter. Besides the English offshoots, moreover, there were several Irish foundations, which had intimate relations with Furness, and even claimed to have had their beginnings from it. From early times it would also appear that the bishops of the Isle of Man were wont to be chosen by the advice of the abbot of Furness and frequently from his community. The connexion between the Isle of Man and Furness was always close, and in some indefinite way the abbot appears to have enjoyed a kind of jurisdiction over it. Rushin Abbey, the daughter-house of Furness in the island, enjoyed the distinction of remaining undisturbed in the sixteenth century for some considerable time after the rest of the monasteries in the three

kingdoms had been dissolved. In Ireland several Cistercian houses were either cells of Furness or looked on it as their mother house; for instance, Fermoy or *De Costro Dei;* Ynes or *De insula*, in county Down; Holy Cross, in the diocese of Cashell, and one or two more.

The extent of the possessions of the abbey entailed obligations, and required that the monks should furnish a number of soldiers to the King in any need. The number is put at 1,200 men, of whom a third were horsemen. At the battle of Flodden Sir Edward Stanley commanded such a contingent of "Furness men." Even during the time that the abbey existed, the iron ore of the neighbourhood was worked, although probably not with any great vigour. Still there are records showing that for the purpose of smelting the ore the monks had erected two furnaces on Walney Island, which stretches out at the foot of the peninsula opposite the modern Barrow-in-Furness. The monks also were possessed of ships for the purpose of trading with foreign countries, and no doubt the iron ore or smelted iron, was their chief trading commodity.

The destruction of Furness, as one of the larger abbeys, came at a somewhat earlier date than many in a similar position and of equal importance. The fact that it was able, even in a slight degree, to be connected with the Pilgrimage of Grace gave the royal officials a means of exerting pressure upon the community of which they were not slow to avail themselves. Roger Pyle was at that time the abbot, and he and some of

his community, "with the tenants and servants, were successfully examined in private" by the royal agents as to their transactions with the northern insurgents. The result was summed up in a bill of accusations against some members of the abbey. The abbot at the time of the visitation had caused his monks to be foresworn. The monks of Sawley, on the suppression of that monastery, had been sent back to Furness as their mother house, and directly the rebellion had broken out, the abbot had induced them to go back to their old home and begin their religious life again. The abbot also "concealed the treason of Henry Sawley, monk, who said no secular knave should be head of the Church." These accusations were framed by a friar named Robert Legat; and a priest named Roger Pele, vicar of Dalton, said that the abbot did not keep the King's injunctions; and one of the monks, John Broughton, added that the prophecies of the Holy Maid of Kent were known at Furness. A tenant, too, declared that the abbot of Furness had ordered the monks to do the best for the commons, "which," runs the official record, "the abbot in his confession doth flatly deny."

As regards the monks, the prior, Brian Garner, and one of the seniors, John Grayn, were reported to have assembled the convent tenants on All-Hallows' Eve, when the latter said that "the King should make no more abbots there, but they would choose them themselves," etc.

The result of the inquiry held at Furness was reported to the King by the Earl of Sussex. A sufficient amount of vague accusation had been obtained against the abbot to have secured for him a fate similar to that of the abbots of Whalley and Sawley, and to ensure the passing of the monastic property to the King by the attainder and death of the abbot. The Earl of Sussex, however, hit upon another plan. The King had written to him: "By such examinations as you have sent us it appeareth that the abbot of Furness and divers of his monks have not been of that truth towards us that to their duties appertaineth. We desire and pray you (therefore) with all the dexterity you can, to devise and excogitate, to use all the means to you possible, to ensearch and try out the very truth of their proceedings and with whom they or any of them have had any intelligence . . . and our pleasure is, that you shall, upon further examination, commit the said abbot and such of his monks as you shall suspect to have been offenders to ward; to remain till you shall, upon the signification unto us of such other things as by your wisdom you shall try out, know further our pleasure."

In reply to this communication Sussex wrote on April 6 that it was impossible to get more out of the abbot than he had previously done. He had committed to safe custody in Lancaster Castle two of the monks (of whom Henry Sawley was apparently one) "which was all we could find faulty." Seeing, therefore, that it was not likely that any "material thing," done "after the pardon,'

would be discovered against the abbot and his monks "that would serve the purpose," the earl now exposed his own plan for obtaining at once the rich possessions of Furness Abbey for the King. "I, the said earl," he says, "devising with myself, if one way would not serve how and by what other means the said monks might be rid from the said abbey, and consequently how the same be at your gracious pleasure, caused the said abbot might be sent for to Whalley; and thereupon, after we had examined him, and indeed could not perceive that it was possible for us to have any other matter, I, the said earl, as before by the advice of other of your council, determined to essay him as of myself, whether he would be contented to surrender, give and grant unto your heirs and assigns the said monastery."

The position did not admit of any doubt. It was a choice between death and surrender: and with the fate of his brother abbots clearly before his mind, and with the bodies of Abbot Paslew of Whalley and his companions still, perhaps, swinging before the gate of Whalley, it is not surprising that Sussex carried his point. So on April 5, 1537, in the presence of Sussex and others, Abbot Roger Pyle signed the official paper surrendering Furness and all its possessions to the King, because of the "misorder and evil lives, both unto God and our prince, of the brethren of the said monastery."

Immediately this document had been obtained from the abbot, three knights were dispatched from Whalley "to take into their hands, rule and governance

the said house to the use of your highness and to see that the monks and servants of the same be kept in due order and nothing be embezzled." Then the deed of surrender was drawn up ready for the signature of the monks, and on the following Monday, April 9, 1537, the commissioners arrived with the abbot and the deed already prepared. It was read to the community in their Chapter House, and they at once took the only course possible and ratified the act of their superior. Thirty monks out of the thirty-three named as the community by Sussex signed the document, two were in prison in Lancaster, only one apparently did not affix his name to the instrument of their corporate extinction.

No pension was granted to the monks in exchange for the surrender. All they had of their own on being turned out into the world was forty shillings each, except three out of the thirty, "which being sick and impotent were given sixty shillings."

"The vast and magnificent edifice of Furness was forsaken," writes Canon Dixon, "the lamp of the altar of St Mary went out for ever, and in the deserted cloisters no sound was heard but the axe and hammer of those who came to cut away the lead, dash down the bells, hew away the rafters and break in pieces the arches and pillars. Thus dismantled, the ruin was left as a common quarry for the convenience of every countryman who could cart away the sculptured stones for building a pigstye or a byre."

The sales of the monastic goods realized the great

THE CLOISTERS, FURNESS ABBEY

sum of close on £800, and bands of imported workmen were employed for a long time on the work of wrecking the buildings. "Also," says the official account, "paid to divers and sundry labourers and artificers hired, as well for taking down of the lead of the said monastery, with costs of melting and casting the same, as for pulling down of the church, steeple and other 'housing' of the said monastery, with emption and provision of ropes and other engines occupied about the same, £70 4s. 9d."

Here, as elsewhere, the poor felt the suppression most keenly. From time immemorial, on Maundy Thursday, alms had been bestowed on the poor at the abbey gate, and a hundred poor boys in the cloister each received more than a shilling of our money. Yearly on St Crispin's Day five oxen were distributed among the most needy. Each week eight poor widows had their bread and beer at the monastic kitchen, daily the poor were relieved at the almonry, whilst from the foundation of the house till the dissolution thirteen poor people were daily maintained within its walls.

It has been computed that the total of the charities distributed at Furness Abbey whilst the monks were there amounted yearly to a sum equal to £500 of our money.

The ruins, which are now the property of the Duke of Devonshire, are religiously cared for, and they cannot fail to exert a fascination over all lovers of architecture and of the bygone ages. Wordsworth

has expressed what he felt on seeing Furness in one of his sonnets:

> Here, where havoc tired and rash undoing
> Man left the structure to become Time's prey;
> A soothing spirit following in the way
> That nature takes, her counter-work pursuing;
> See how her ivy clasps the sacred ruin
> Fall to prevent or beautify decay,
> And on the mouldering walls how bright, how gay
> The flowers in pearly dew their bloom renewing.

CHAPTER X

Fountains

IT is hardly possible to imagine a more fascinating sight than the ruins of Fountains seen in the distance from the high ground above. For beauty of position, for architectural perfection, and for the extent of the still existing buildings, the abbey of "Our Lady of the Water Springs," must be allowed the first place among similar English sights. The obvious care now bestowed upon the preservation of all that destroying hands have left adds in an unexpected way to the charm which the remains of church and buildings exert over the mind. No tree or shrub has been allowed to grow up from within either church or cloister; no ivy clothes the walls or clings to mullion and pillar; and no scattered masonry cumbers the ground. All is in order, as far as order is possible in such a vast ruin, and the effect of the whitened walls and towers as seen from afar is to add a somewhat mysterious, ghostly character to the buildings. Over all stands out against the sky the great tower which forms so distinguishing a mark at Fountains, and on its cornice the visitor may still read the legend cut deep in stone: *Regi sæculorum*, etc., "To the Immortal and Invisible King of Ages, to the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Fountains owed its existence to the movement towards a stricter form of religious life which was initiated at Citeau in the last quarter of the eleventh century by St Robert, and was carried to perfection by Stephen Harding and St Bernard. During the lifetime of the latter, the Cistercians, as they were called after their place of origin, became established in England, and the Order quickly took deep root. The first house in this country was apparently that of Furness in Lancashire, founded by Stephen of Blois in 1127. The main object aimed at by this branch of the Benedictine Order was to secure the greater personal sanctification of the members in the stricter observance of the Rule. For the purpose of developing the contemplative side of the religious life the Cistercians made choice of lonely valleys or other sequestered spots where they might lead a life of solitude, free from care and distracting thoughts. Hence came the saying: *Bernardus valles amabat.*

In Yorkshire the first foundation made by St Bernard, as "a layer from his noble vine at Clairvaulx," was at Rievaulx. At this time, in some of the Benedictine monasteries of England, there were religious souls who desired to take part in the Cistercian movement, and to leave their own cloister for a stricter form of observance. So when the mode of life at Rievaulx became known at St Mary's, York, twenty miles away, some of the monks were moved with a desire to join the new observance. At first there were but seven of them, and, apparently, the difficulty they experienced

FOUNTAINS ABBEY: THE "SURPRISE VIEW"

in obtaining permission to leave their monastery was mainly owing to the good state of their own house of St Mary. With opposition and discussion, however, their numbers grew until there were sufficient for a Cistercian foundation, namely thirteen, of whom one was the prior. Their abbot at St Mary's having refused absolutely to allow his monks to take up their new venture, they appealed to Thurstan, the Archbishop of York, to help them. After convincing himself of their genuine vocation, the Archbishop agreed to do so, and under his protection they left St Mary's Abbey on October 4, 1132, taking nothing away with them but their religious habits. St Bernard subsequently wrote to Abbot Geoffrey of St Mary's to deny that he or any of the Clairvaulx monks had suggested or inspired this exodus from his monastery, but at the same time he indicated that to him in all this movement the working of God's Spirit could be seen. The Saint also wrote to encourage the monks of the York abbey who desired to pass under his rule, and to tell them he was sending brother Geoffrey, "a holy and religious man," to rule over them and train them in the practices of the Cistercian Order.

In the meantime the twelve monks from St Mary's, York, with Prior Richard at their head, had left their cloister and were shut up in the house of Archbishop Thurstan, since, notwithstanding the protests and censures of their abbot, they refused to return to St Mary's. Finally, the Archbishop gave them a plot of ground

near Ripon, which had previously been a wild, uncultivated place. It was situated near to the running water of the river Skell, was enclosed by rocky ground and thorn-covered hills, and was a fitting place in which to build for themselves a monastery of strict observance. He appointed Prior Richard their abbot and blessed him upon Christmas Day, 1132. The winter was upon them, and it was passed amid great privations, for there were as yet no buildings whatever, and the little colony was lodged beneath a giant elm which stood in the midst of the valley and possibly also under some of the great yew trees which bear the name of the "seven sisters," and one or two of which, preserved in their old age with every care, still remain. The elm, as a manifestation of God's care over this little flock, is said to have kept its leaves green during the whole of the long northern winter. There the monks all lived together, twelve priests and one deacon, and, as far as might be, carried out the regular life during the dark days and long nights under the branches of the great elm. The bishop provided them with bread, and for drink they had the overflowing water of their stream. So the place became to them, *Sancta Maria de Fontibus*—Our Lady of the Springs. After the summer had come to them in the valley, they took counsel together and determined to send to St Bernard with a request that he would take them under his care and make them associates of the celebrated monastery of Clairvaulx. This the Saint did, and, as has just been said, he then sent them as their guide the

FOUNTAINS ABBEY FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

experienced brother Geoffrey. Thus was begun the great abbey of Fountains.

The little band quickly grew; seventeen new brethren arrived almost at the same time, and of these seven were priests. Alas! the resources of the infant community did not increase with their numbers, and for some time the lot of the monks of Fountains was hard and indeed well-nigh impossible. To add to their trials and misfortunes a famine everywhere afflicted the land at that time; although the abbot went out of his valley to seek for food for his brethren, it was not forthcoming, and for a while at least the community had to subsist as best they could upon the leaves of the trees and such herbs as could be found in their valley. Their elm tree, as the chronicle says, thus at this time furnished them with food as well as with shelter.

One day, so the story goes, whilst in the straits of poverty, there came to them a poor man asking help in Christ's name. The porter replied that they had nothing to give and, indeed, were themselves in absolute need; but on the poor man persisting in his request the monk went to his abbot to report the case. The abbot, finding that there were two loaves left in the house, ordered that one should be given to the beggar in full trust that the Lord would Himself make provision for His servants who relied upon Him. Nor was his confidence disappointed, for within a brief space two men arrived from Knaresborough Castle with a plentiful supply of food for all the brethren. Recognizing this as a mani-

festation of God's goodness to them, they gave to Him thanks "Who gives food to those who fear Him."

As time went on, the situation of the little band of monks at Fountains became intolerable. Poverty they had wedded, but not famine and destitution. So Abbot Richard went over to see St Bernard, and to try and find some place in fair France, where they might be able at least to support their lives whilst serving God. But even during the time when he was on his journey, behold, the long-looked-for benefactor appeared at Fountains in the person of Master Hugh, Dean of York, who joined the community, bringing with him books, money and possessions. Part of the money they at once devoted to assist the poor; part they reserved for their own support, and part they employed in building up their monastery. And, as is so often the case, this good fortune did not come alone: first another canon of York, Serlo by name, also a rich man, joined the community, and then a second canon, called Toste, *homo jucundus et sociabilis*, a pleasant and sociable man, as he is called in the chronicle, followed his example. Other blessings followed in swift succession; additions were made to their property by various benefactors, and privileges were granted by Kings and Popes.

From that day, writes Serlo, who as a monk was now the annalist of his house, "God blessed our valleys with the blessing of heaven above and of the deep that lieth under, multiplying our brethren, increasing our possessions, extending our vineyards and pouring down

the showers of His benediction upon us. . . . The Lord, as the Prophet said, was a wall round about us, on the right hand and on the left. He permitted no man to hurt us and He blessed the works of our hands. "Oh God!" says Serlo, in heartfelt thanksgiving, "What perfection of life was there not at this time at Fountains! What emulation in virtue! What fervour in keeping the Rule! What discipline! Our Fathers were become a spectacle to angels and to men; and they impressed on their posterity that method of holy religious life, which, with God's help, will be kept here for ever."

Soon after its foundation the Abbey of Fountains was called on to send out colonies to begin new houses. In 1137 a nobleman named Ralph de Merlay, after spending by chance a day at Fountains, determined to build a similar abbey near his own property at Morpeth. The result was the establishment of Newminster with its first abbot from Fountains. In time the house became the fruitful mother of three Cistercian daughters at Pipewell, Sawley, and Roche. The next year, 1138, Kirkstead Abbey on the river Witham and Louth Park was also founded, the two colonies leaving Fountains on the same day. Again in 1145, at the prayer of Hugh de Bolebec, the monks of Fountains made a foundation at Woburn. And in 1146 thirteen of the brethren, at the invitation of the bishop of Bergen who had visited Fountains and was charmed with it, went over into Norway and established the monastery at Lisakloster. Their leader in this expedition far afield was Ralph,

one of the original community which had gone out from St Mary's, York. In his old age Abbot Ralph returned to Fountains to die, and it is pleasantly said in the chronicle that there by God's providence "an angel was specially deputed to visit and console him, who was also wont to awaken him when he slept too long at night."

In the following year, 1147, three colonies were despatched from the prolific house of Fountains; namely, Kirkstall, Meaux and Vaudey; and thus in the space of less than twenty years St Mary of Fountains had established eight daughter houses. A few years later the Cistercian General Chapter discouraged this multiplication of houses, and it was feared that the Order had been growing too quickly to maintain the spiritual vigour of the individual monasteries.

The first necessary buildings were erected at Fountains during the administration of the first two abbots (1132-1139). The monk Geoffrey, who it will be remembered was sent over from Clairvaulx by St Bernard, showed them what buildings were needed by Cistercians: the great cloister with the church on the north, the Chapter House with parlour and library on the east, with the dormitory above; the refectory, calefactory and kitchen on the south; the store-house with dormitory for lay brethren on the west. Outside the central group were infirmary, guest house, mills, bakehouse, etc. The first buildings were partly of stone and partly of wood, the stone coming from the rocky sides of the valley in which they lived.

BOROUGH OF LEATHERHEAD
BROCKLEY

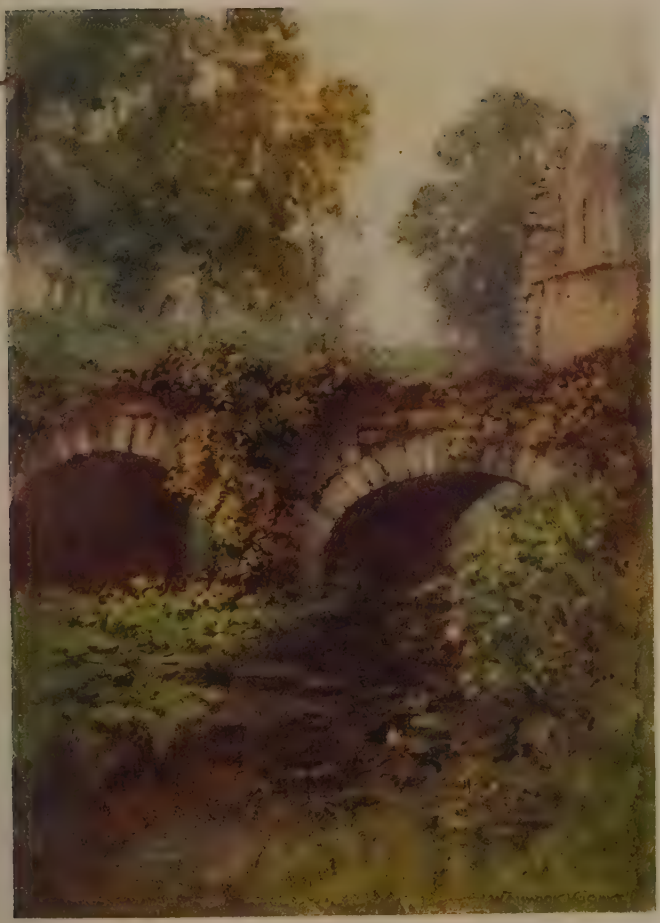
FOUNTAINS ABBEY: THE CLOISTERS

About the middle of the twelfth century misfortune befell the abbey. The abbot, Henry Murdack, became involved in certain disputes about the succession to the See of York: one party, deeming themselves injured by the adherence of the abbey to the other side, made their way into the valley and, forcing the gates of the abbey, sacked it. Much was ruthlessly destroyed, some things plundered and carried away, the rest in the spirit of wanton waste was set on fire. The great church, built with such labour and at such a cost, was burnt, and the very altar was not respected. The community, says the chronicler, "stood about their holy place and saw what had been raised by the sweat of their own brows consumed to ashes." By the help of the neighbours, however, much of the damage was quickly repaired, so that in the end "the new was better than the old."

In 1170 Robert of Pipewell, on the death of Abbot Richard, was chosen to rule at Fountains. He was evidently a powerful administrator and is praised by the author of the chronicle for many virtues. He is especially commended for his zeal in beautifying the church and "erecting sumptuous buildings," but what special part he added we are not told. Three abbots, all named John, ruled Fountains during the first half of the thirteenth century, and in their time (1203-1247) the fabric of the house was completed. The number of the brethren, even at the beginning of this period, had increased so much that the choir was found to be too

small to contain them and the altars were not sufficient for all to say Mass. It was at the time when Abbot John, the first of that name, ruled the community. The days were evil, and it was at this period that King John was exacting vast sums from the religious houses of England, and many a house had to sell even its altar plate and pledge the sacred vestments to satisfy the royal rapacity. Nevertheless, although many considered him rash, the abbot, trusting to God's providence, determined to pull down the east part of the church and rebuild it on lines of greater magnificence. To his large ideas is commonly ascribed the new chancel and the plan of the chapel of the nine altars. He had begun, and had even erected certain columns of the structure, when he died. The third Abbot John, who held the government for twenty-seven years, completed what his predecessors had begun. Indeed, a whole series of important buildings are assigned to this time, including the chapel of the nine altars, the new choir, the reconstruction of the cloister, the infirmary, the guest house, the pavement of the church with tiles, the bakehouse and the bridge.

At this point the delightful chronicle of Fountains fails us, but the stone records of the buildings themselves tell us that little was done to the material fabric from 1247, the date of the death of Abbot John III, till in 1479, when another Abbot John—John Darnton—made some improvements and additions. He pulled out the old windows in the west end of the nave and in the



A BRIDGE, FOUNTAINS ABBEY

BOROUGH OF BROOKLEY

chapel of the nine altars, and put in decorated ones in their place. After him, quite on the very eve of the destruction of the monastery, Abbot Marmaduke Huby built the great tower which still looks down upon the desecrated building, proclaiming the faith of those who raised it to God's glory.

The end came to Fountains with startling suddenness. On a Sunday in July, 1536, a preacher who was maintaining at Jervaulx that the King was head of the Church was interrupted by one of the monks from Fountains who happened to be there. Cistercians could hold no such new-fangled doctrine; they certainly did not teach that at Fountains. Parliament had just suppressed the lesser monasteries, and although it had at the same time declared that the greater abbeys, of which Fountains was one, were above suspicion, there were many who saw in the fate of the houses under £200 a year a presage of the coming general suppression. Although, as we now know, nothing could have warded off the rising storm, it was no doubt a misfortune for Fountains that at so critical a time it should have had a superior neither wise, nor competent, nor even worthy. Abbot Thirsk's deposition had been mooted some years before, and he was accused of dissipating the goods of his house and of not seeing that the service of God was kept at Fountains as of old. Layton and Legh, the King's commissioners in 1536, suggested even worse things about him and compelled him to resign. He had a scanty pension assigned to

him, and took refuge at Jervaulx; there, becoming involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace in some way not quite obvious, he was hanged at Tyburn as the easiest way of getting rid of him and his pension.

On Abbot Thirsk's deposition the office was purchased by one Marmaduke Bradley for a large sum paid to Thomas Crumwell, the King's all-powerful minister. The commissioners declare that he was one of the wisest monks in England, and their immediate proof of their character of him was the offer he made through them to buy the abbey. At any rate Marmaduke Bradley secured a good pension for himself by surrendering the house into the King's hands, three years after his appointment, in November, 1539.

Then began the destruction. The abbot went to Ripon, where he held a prebendal stall; but the prior and his thirty brethren were quickly expelled, to find their own way in the world and to face the coming winter. They were despoiled of their religious habits, were each allotted a citizen's gown, and were then set outside their own gate and told to find their way about a world, which many of them had left long years before, and under circumstances for which they were ill prepared.

The gold, silver and other precious ornaments of the shrines and altars, the chalices and cups and "jewells" generally were collected and, with the best of the vestments and copes and albs, were sent up to London. In all 939 ounces of silver and thirteen ounces of gold

with precious stones were thus sent. The crowds, which assembled to see the end, as at the daughter house of Roche, no doubt helped themselves to what they could lay their hands upon; the servants of the commissioners probably took more, and even their masters did not disdain to annex an article or two of the plunder. Then the windows and doors and shutters disappeared, and the bells were taken down and broken up for removal. Finally, the roofs—especially where there was lead—were pulled down, and in the choir and nave of the beautiful church huge fires were made from the wood of the stalls and screens and altars, to melt down the lead into pigs and fodders against the coming of the King's valuers. When all was counted up, it was found that the church goods fetched only £60 and the domestic goods £160. There still remained on the ground 711 fodders of lead and ten bells, weighing 10,000lbs in all.

As regards the property, Sir Richard Gresham, father of the more celebrated Sir Thomas, wrote to Crumwell to secure from the King, "by purchase of his grace, certain lands belonging to the house of Fountains, to the value of £350 a year, after the rate of twenty years' purchase." "The sum of money," he adds, "amounteth to £7,000." What the value of the lands really was it is impossible to say, but one obvious result of the dissolution was the wholesale raising of the rents previously paid by the monastic tenants, to the great detriment of the poor. An instance of this hardship may be cited in this very case of Fountains.

The King's valuers, in 1540, placed on the granges belonging to the abbey, which had previously paid £156 14s. 4d., an increased value of £30, or nearly a fifth. Thirty-five years afterwards, in 1575, Gresham's increased rental, not including that on five of the granges, was £45 7s. more than all were rented at according to the valuation of 1540, or a rise of some fifty per cent on the whole.

The editor of *The Memorials of Fountains* for the Surtees Society, after noticing the facts given above, says that it "will show that the monks were just and merciful landlords, and that the lament of the fall of the abbeys in these parts, which old Henry Jenkins lived to report to the Cavaliers and Roundheads, might have partially arisen from more material reasons than a change of religion."

CHAPTER XI

Glastonbury

THE name of Glastonbury carries the imagination far back into the dim past. The few scattered and grass-grown ruins, which now alone remain of the once vast pile of buildings, mark the site of one of the most renowned sanctuaries of the Christian world. The history of this sacred spot goes back to days before the age of written records, for it is founded upon legends which connect it even with some of the first disciples of our Lord Himself. The story of the place is told in song and prose, in fact and fiction, in the legends and in the chronicles, which relate the beginnings of the English people. It opens with a vision of a venerable man from the tomb of Christ, bearing with him the Holy Grail, the chalice of his Master's Supper, and planting in the soil of Somerset his staff cut from some Eastern thorn. Tennyson thus alludes to this ancient legend:

> The cup, the cup itself from which our Lord
> Drank at the last sad Supper with his own,
> This from the blessed land of Aramat,
> After the day of darkness, when the dead
> Went wandering over Moriah—the good Saint
> Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
> To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
> Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.

And the long story of the place ends in the sixteenth century with the violent and ignominious death of an old white-haired monk, the last of a long and honourable succession of abbots, by order of an English king in the evil days of Tudor despotism.

Between St Joseph of Arimathea, the hero of Glastonbury's earliest legend, and Abbot Richard Whiting, the victim of an English king's rapacity, the space of wellnigh fifteen centuries intervened; and Chalice Hill and Tor Hill, which still look down upon the ruins, and the very names of which are associated with him who brought the Holy Grail to our shores, and with him whose gallows crowned the height by St Michael's tower, have been silent witnesses during all those centuries of a great and varied history. The memories of the British Inyswytryn, the Saxon Glæstingburge, the modern Glastonbury, or as it was sometimes called the isle of Avalon, include the names of Arthur, the British hero, and of Alfred, the saviour of the Saxon race from the ferocity and rapacity of the Danes. Hither too came Gildas, from his hermitage on the Steep Holme away across the waters of the Channel, to reconcile Arthur to his Queen Guinevere. And hither also:

> To the island-valley of Avilion;
> Where falls not hail, or rain or any snow,
> Nor even wind blows loudly; but it lies
> Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
> And bowery hollows, crown'd with summer sea.

Hither came Arthur, when wounded in the battle of Camlin, to die and seek for burial by the side of his

GLASTONBURY ABBEY: ST. JOSEPH'S CHAPEL

BROCKLEY
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Queen, who had already been laid to rest within the precincts of that Sanctuary. Here, centuries later, in 1191, King Henry II caused to be made an examination of the spot pointed out by the Welsh bards as the place of Arthur's burial, and Giraldus Cambrensis, who professes to have been an eyewitness, describes the finding of a large flat stone with a leaden cross underneath, bearing in rude characters the inscription: *Hic jacet sepultus inclitus rex Arturius in insula Avalonia.*

Beneath this again there was discovered a large coffin of hollowed oak with two cavities, one containing the bones of Arthur, the other those of Guinevere. They were removed to a handsome tomb in the church, where they remained undisturbed till 1278, when Edward I and his Queen, Eleanor, kept Easter at the abbey. On that occasion the King desiring to see with his own eyes the relics of the illustrious British King and his Consort, ordered the tomb to be opened. Edward himself took out the relics of Arthur; carrying these, and Eleanor those of Guinevere, with much ceremony they bore them to the High Altar, where the people were allowed to inspect them.

In fact Glastonbury was already old in its traditions, and its memory was venerable in its legends before the Briton gave place to the Saxon. When, some time about the year 650, the shrine passed into the hands of the Saxon conqueror, these later were no longer pagan idolaters but Christian warriors, who venerated

the sacred traditions of the spot no less than had the conquered Britons.

One relic of this early time was preserved through the course of the centuries even until the destruction of the monastery in the days of Henry VIII. According to tradition, St David of Menevia came to Inyswytryn, as Glastonbury was called in British times, bringing with him precious gifts and offerings and, it is said, anxious to make the sanctuary his last resting-place. To show his veneration he proposed to dedicate the church to our Blessed Lady, but was admonished in a dream of the supernatural consecration of the shrine at its first erection. St David thereupon built a second church near to the ancient wooden one, and dedicated it to the Mother of God. To this sacred place he made an offering of a rich altar stone of sapphire adorned with gold and costly gems, a present from the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and this precious gift survived to the end in the possession of the Abbey. During the contests between Saxon and Dane, which caused such havoc and destruction throughout the length and breadth of the land, this "Sapphire altar" was concealed, and for a time its hiding-place appears to have been forgotten. Subsequently, however, the stone was discovered in a recess of the old church, and it appears as one of the abbey's most treasured possessions in the inventory drawn up by the commissioners appointed by Henry VIII to seize the property of the abbey in 1539. "Item," it is recorded, "delyvered unto his majestie . . .

a superatare garnished with silver and gilt, called the Great saphire of Glasgonburge."

During the Saxon period the abbey increased in renown and in influence: it became indeed the centre of Christianity in southern and western England. Although we have little direct proof of the fact, it seems almost certain that wandering Irish scholars came over to Glastonbury, tarried and taught there for a while, and departing left behind them their books and treatises to be the treasured possessions of future generations of scholars. The sanctuary, probably by reason of its position, escaped complete destruction at the hands of the Danes, who passed over the country wrecking and plundering monasteries and churches and overthrowing the Christian altars. It suffered, however, greatly: and it was at this period, at the lowest depth of his ill-fortune, that King Alfred sought shelter in the neighbourhood and, at least according to legend, found strength and courage to make his successful stand against the dreaded Dane in a vision which came to him in the sanctuary at Glastonbury.

In the tenth century the abbey was ruled by one who not only shed a glory over it by the holiness of his life and by his abilities, but who was also called upon to shape the destinies of his country. This was the celebrated St Dunstan, who, born almost under the shadow of the monastery, in his youth became a monk there. He subsequently as abbot did much to rebuild the walls of the sanctuary, and to implant in the souls

of his brethren a love for the true principles of the Benedictine method of life. For a while Dunstan, destined for a more extended sphere of usefulness, found peace and true happiness in the secluded cloister life at Glastonbury. His biographers picture him for us as sitting in the corridors of the abbey with the brethren; as walking with a companion about the enclosure leaning on a staff; as visiting the cells and offices to see that all was in order; as superintending the building and ornamentation of the abbey which under his care was then rising from its ruins; as even personally watching over the arrangements of the kitchen and other domestic concerns; or as rising before the day had dawned to copy, study or revise the manuscripts of his house, or to kneel motionless in the church with hands lifted heavenwards and face moist with tears. All agree in describing his kindly genial demeanour to others, his gentle yet firm method of teaching and his special love for boys. After a period of perhaps fifteen years spent in his beloved home at Glastonbury, and in his best-loved occupations of the cloistered life, Dunstan became Bishop of Winchester, and then Archbishop of Canterbury. But amidst all the occupations for Church and State which engrossed the greater part of his life, he never forgot his monastic home, and his name has ever been irrevocably associated with Glastonbury.

During the closing period of the struggle between Saxon and Dane in England, in the first decades of the eleventh century, the sanctuary was honoured by the

GLASTONBURY ABBEY: THE ABBOT'S KITCHEN AND GLASTONBURY TOR

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monarchs of both dynasties. Edmund Ironside enriched the abbey with land and possessions and when, after valiant though vain struggles, he died for his Saxon fatherland, his body was laid to rest in the spot he had chosen for his tomb in St Dunstan's Church. To Glastonbury also in 1030 came King Canute, his Danish successor: and here, after confirming every gift and privilege granted to the place by his Saxon predecessors, he knelt in prayer at the tomb of his rival and spread over it a covering enriched with the embroidery of skilled Saxon ladies. Ten years later King Hardicanute testified his devotion to the hallowed spot by the present of a superb shrine to hold the relics of St Benignus.

The Norman Conquest brought difficulties in the government of the house. It was part of the Conqueror's policy to replace Saxon bishops and abbots by Norman prelates wherever this could be done. So here, at Glastonbury, the Saxon abbot Ailnoth was made to give place to the Norman Thurstan. Ailnoth and several of the monks of his house were interred by Lanfranc's order at Canterbury and at the same time a not inconsiderable portion of the monastic estate was distributed amongst the foreign followers of William. The imposition of Norman superiors over them must obviously have been everywhere distasteful to the English monks. The very presence in their midst of an alien abbot was a standing reminder of the fallen fortunes of the English race; and in the case of Glaston-

bury this not unnatural resentment was aggravated by the imperious temper and inconsiderate disposition of the individual chosen by the King to rule them, and by his determination to uproot all old English customs and traditions, in order to impose upon them what at least the monks considered to be new-fangled Norman notions of monasticism. An attempt made to force the Glastonbury monks to adopt the chant of one William of Fescamp in place of what they had been accustomed to, and which rightly or wrongly they regarded as the music they had received from Rome itself, led to a refusal of the monks to obey in this matter. Abbot Thurstan sent for armed laymen into the Chapter House to coerce them by a show of force. The monks took refuge in the church, out of which the abbot's armed men strove to drag them. This at first failed, and the monks took refuge in the sanctuary, only to be fired upon by the arrows of the Frenchmen. In the end the laymen rushed in and regardless of the sanctity of the place "slew some of the monks and wounded many more, so that blood ran down from the altar on to the steps, and from the steps to the floor." "Three," adds the chronicle, "were smitten to death and eighteen wounded."

The horror caused by this scandal led to the removal of Abbot Thurstan by order of William the Conqueror; and for a time there was peace. The Norman abbot, however, abided his time at Caen, and taking advantage of King Rufus's empty coffers, he offered that

monarch 500 pounds of silver for permission to return to Glastonbury. His reappearance immediately brought on fresh disturbances. Many of the monks sought shelter in neighbouring monasteries, and did not return until the appointment of Herlewyn on Thurstan's death.

In 1126 Henry of Blois, the nephew of King Henry I, became abbot of Glastonbury, and although he was made Bishop of Winchester after only three years of rule, he obtained leave to retain the emoluments of his abbacy. He lived to enjoy these revenues for forty-five years, but in the main he spent them upon the reconstruction of the church and monastery. Adam of Domerham, the chronicler of the house, records that "he built the bell tower, the Chapter House, cloister, lavatory, refectory and dormitory; also the infirmary with its chapel; a splendid large palace; a spacious gateway, remarkable for its squared stones; a large brewhouse, and stables for many horses." These he erected right from the foundation to their completion, and over and "besides these works he gave many princely ornaments to the Church."

King Henry II refused to allow the monks to elect a superior on the death of Bishop de Blois, but sent an official to manage the monastic revenues, which he kept in his own hands. During this time, and, indeed, not very long after the death of the bishop, a fire destroyed most of the monastic buildings. This happened in 1184, and the old monastic chronicler thus bemoans the disaster: "In the following summer, that is to say on St

Urban's day [May 25, 1184], the whole of the monastery, except a chamber constructed in the Chapel by Abbot Robert, into which the monks afterwards betook themselves, and the bell-tower built by Bishop Henry, was consumed by fire. The beautiful buildings lately erected by Henry of Blois and the Church, a place so venerated by all and the shelter of so many saints, were reduced to ashes. What sorrow was suffered! What groans arose! What tears were shed as the monks saw what had taken place, and pondered over the losses they had suffered. Their precious treasures, not only the gold and silver, but the stuffs and silks, the books and other ecclesiastical ornaments were thrown into a state of confusion which must bring tears to the eyes even of those who far away do but hear of these things."

King Henry II, determined to restore Glastonbury out of the monastic revenues which he still kept in his hands, and which were administered by the King's official, FitzStephen. In the royal charter granted in 1184 Henry says: "I, laying the foundation of the church at Glastonbury, which was reduced to ashes whilst it was in my hands, have determined to repair it either by myself or my heirs." Up to the time of the fire the old church or lady chapel had remained, as originally built, a wooden structure. According to a tradition in the place, St Paulinus had not dared to touch what even in his day was regarded as a most sacred monument of antiquity, and to preserve it had cased it in boards lined with lead. When, in 708, Ina King of

GLASTONBURY ABBEY: REMAINS OF THE GREAT TOWER AND OTHER BUILDINGS

Wessex had granted his charter of privileges to the abbey, in order to render the act more solemn, he signed it in the *Ignea Basilica*, which, following the advice of St Aldhelm, he refrained from attempting even to beautify. This cherished relic of antiquity was totally destroyed by the fire of 1184, and upon the site of the old wooden structure was built the present lady chapel, now often miscalled "St Joseph's Chapel." This beautiful specimen of thirteenth-century Gothic architecture was finished in 1216, and the chronicler, Adam de Domerham, thus records the fact: "He [King Henry II] completed the church of squared stones of the most splendid work, in the place where from the beginning the old church had stood, sparing nothing that could add to its ornamentation."

The greater church, dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul, was only beginning to rise from its ashes when Henry died. This delayed the progress of reconstruction, and the vast building of which only a very inadequate idea may be formed by the ivy-grown arcaded walls, the pointed windows and great piers, which lift two portions of a springing keyless arch skyward, was carried out by a succession of abbots during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. "Standing on the green sward in the centre of the nave, in front of the ruins of the great arch," says a modern writer, "the eye cannot help filling in the missing structure. Three other great arches rise up to join their survivor, and to support the vaulting of the central tower, the transepts

with triforium and clerestory branch off right and left, through the screen with its rood" and Mary and John, "the vista of the choir converges on the High Altar and reredos, upon which the mellow light of the windows beyond cast soft blended colour. The twenty pillars of the nave lift up their arches to the arcading of the triforium, from which springs the decorated groining of the roof; tracery and moulding, panel and shaft, colour and gold, tomb and brass fill in the picture; surely these are mailed knights kneeling, and sturdy burghers, and women in homespun, and arch-eyed children scattered over the glistening tiles of the pavement; the hooded monks glide in, the sanctuary glitters with silk and embroidery, the organ rolls its echoes through the arches, chasing the fumes of the incense. A sudden hush, and the reverie has ended, and you stand, with the blue sky above, on the soft greensward of the nave leading up grass-green steps to the soft sward of the sanctuary, and the great arch looks down on you while ivy and shrub cling to their foot-hold in its mouldings and crumbling masonry."

If the reconstruction of the church of Glastonbury after the fire went on slowly enough during the two hundred years that followed the catastrophe, the abbots who ruled the destinies of the abbey during that period and after, vie with one another in collecting plate and jewels, missals and choir-books, vestments and copes and hangings with which to render the ceremonial at Glastonbury more worthy of the worship

carried out within the newly built-up walls, and to make the place resplendent with all that art and skill and English craft could produce. As one reads the lists of precious gifts and cunningly fashioned plate, of the silks and brocades embroidered by English artists and enriched with needlework imagery and ornament, one can but sigh to think of the wanton destruction which swept away all these art treasures without leaving even a trace of a collection which must have been second to none of the ecclesiastical treasuries of Europe.

The end came to the glories of Glastonbury as it came to the rest of the monastic establishments in the reign of Henry VIII. On a charge of resisting the King's desires, the venerable abbot, Richard Whiting, doomed to death before inquiry, was hanged with two of his brethren on the hill which still overlooks the ruins of this once-famous abbey.

CHAPTER XII

Gloucester

THE waters of the Severn seem in olden times to have possessed some subtle attraction for the Order of St Benedict. On the river's banks, or at any rate in the valley from which it collects its tributary streams, from Gloucester to Shrewsbury, stood Tewkesbury, Pershore, Evesham, Malvern, and Worcester—seven as fine and as glorious monasteries as it is possible to find in England. Gloucester, the first in order, is in many ways the finest of this series; of some of them, alas! little now remains to show what they were in the days of their glory. The external effect of Gloucester is somewhat marred by the long depressed roof of the nave, which is set at a level lower than that of the choir and presbytery, but the superb central tower, which is crowned with open-work parapets and pinnacles, prevents the eye from dwelling on this defect. "Gloucester," says a modern writer, "contains some of the choicest triumphs of Gothic art, and numerous instances of the most ingenious contrivances of mechanical ability, taste and skill."

The abbey of St Peter's, Gloucester, was founded in Saxon times about the year 679; and in process of time it counted no fewer than five cells under its jurisdiction,

GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL AT SUNSET

Ewias, Ewenny, Hereford, Kilpeck and Bromfield. Wulphere, the first Christian King of Mercia, is said to have commenced the work, which was carried on by his brother and successor Ethelred, who somewhat later laid aside his crown to become a monk at Bardney. History relates that in order to insure the continuation of the work after he had taken the cowl, he employed his nephew Osric, who ultimately, by the advice and help of Archbishop Theodore and of Basil, first bishop of Worcester, constituted his sister Kyneburgh the first abbess. She was blessed by Bishop Basil, and ruled the convent of St Peter's, Gloucester, for twenty-nine years.

To Kyneburgh succeeded Edburga, widow of Wulphere, the original founder of Gloucester. She resigned her royal state, and in time, becoming second abbess of St Peter's and ruling it for twenty-five years, was buried near her predecessor Kyneburgh in 735. She was followed in her office by Eva, the wife of Wulfere, son of Penda, who died and was buried at Gloucester in 767.

From this time the abbesses disappear from history. During the wars which now commenced between Egbert, King of Wessex and the Mercians, the nuns are supposed to have left their convent, and for a period of more than fifty years it remained deserted. After that time, when King Bearnulph of Mercia came to the throne, seeing the desolate state of the place, he rebuilt the monastery, but changed it into

a house or college for secular priests. This arrangement continued till 1022, when King Canute, on the representation of St Wulstan, bishop of Worcester, placed Benedictine monks there, and Edric was blessed as the first abbot of Gloucester.

At first the foundation did not appear to prosper, and it was not until William the Conqueror in 1072 appointed a Norman monk, Serlo, that the success of the work seems to have been secured. At his accession Serlo is said to have found but two monks of full age and eight youths in the house, and at his death in 1104 to have left a hundred professed religious. In 1082 William the Conqueror passed Christmas time at the monastery, and three years later the church was burnt, with a considerable part of the city, by the adherents of Robert of Normandy. Abbot Serlo set himself to repair the loss with characteristic energy; on June 29, 1089, the first stone was laid, and on July 15, 1100, the dedication of the new church was celebrated by the bishops of Worcester, Rochester, Hereford, and Bangor. The Norman pillars of the nave built at this time still survive. They are round, and so gigantic that they seem to dwarf the triforium and clerestory. This last has been converted into the early English style when the vaulting was erected. The original ground plan of the Norman church remains a marked feature of Gloucester, and may be noticed in the short transepts with eastern apsidal chapels and those of the apse.

Ordericus Vitalis relates that it was a monk of

GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL: THE CHOIR

BROOKLEY

Gloucester who warned William Rufus of his approaching end in the New Forest. The King refused to listen, and speaking of Abbot Serlo's letter to his attendants, he said: "I wonder why my Lord Serlo has been minded to write this to me, for he is, I believe, a good abbot and a judicious old man? In his extreme simplicity he sends to me, busied with so many affairs, the dreams of his snoring monks, and from a long distance has even sent them to me in writing. Does he suppose that I follow the example of the English, who will defer their journey or their business for the dreams of wheezing old women?" Thus speaking, says the chronicle, the King rose hastily and departed on his hunting expedition in which he met his death.

Abbot Serlo was succeeded in 1104 by Peter, the former prior of the house. Peter had long devoted himself to the study of the Holy Scriptures, and of him the obituary notice says that during his term of office he "encompassed the monastery with a wall and enriched the cloister with a number of books." There exists a remarkable memorial of Abbot Peter in the Art Museum of South Kensington; it is a candlestick of splendid workmanship, the date of which is known with certainty. An inscription on it states that it was made by the Abbot Peter for his church at Gloucester. It is of latten richly gilt and most elaborately ornamented, and it is undoubtedly a wonderful specimen of English art of the period. It is probable, however, that it did not remain long at Gloucester, as in 1122 a disastrous fire

again broke out there, which destroyed everything except a few books and vestments, and in this fire the candlestick would probably have perished. At some subsequent period this great work of art was given to the cathedral of Mans, the canons of which church sold it, and in process of time it was purchased by the South Kensington authorities.

During the twelfth century the abbey of St Peter's, Gloucester, continued to grow and to assert and defend its privileges under a succession of worthy abbots, of whom Gilbert Foliot, subsequently bishop of Hereford and London, was one. During the reign of King John, the monastery suffered grievously by the seizure of its goods, and by the sale of its plate to meet the frequent royal demands for subsidies. In 1216 the abbey church was the scene of great festivities at the coronation of the youthful King Henry III, and in 1222, exactly a century after the great fire already mentioned, another and third disastrous fire broke out in the neighbourhood of the monastery. This same year the great Eastern Tower of the church was completed. In 1239, on September 16, amidst an immense concourse of spectators, Walter Cantilupe, Bishop of Worcester, dedicated the church, now once more rebuilt, to St Peter. Henceforth the anniversary of this festival day was kept at Gloucester as if it were a Sunday. Three years later again (1242) the vaulting of the nave was finished by the monks themselves, they doing the actual work and not employing stone-workers and setters. At the same time

GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL FROM ST. CATHERINE'S MEADOWS

the prior undertook the erection of a tower to the south-west side of the church.

To continue the history of the building: in 1318 the south aisle was groined. The interment of Edward II by the abbot of Gloucester, after Malmesbury, Kingswood, and Bristol had refused to find a tomb for the dead King, led to a great accession of revenue, and the buildings manifest the result. The Norman walls of the south aisle were cased with tracery in the period from 1329 to 1337; the choir was vaulted and a range of stalls were added (1337-51); the lower part of the central tower; the casing of the north aisle with tracery; the south stalls; the presbytery with screens (1351-77). This ended the work of the fourteenth century upon the church fabric. In the period between 1420 and 1437, the west front, two western bays of the nave and the south porch were completed. The central tower was finished in the years 1459-60, and the wonderful lady chapel—a perfect poem in stone—was slowly built up during the forty years from 1457-98. The sedilia and the tiling were the last works executed by the monks (1513-34). The extremely beautiful cloister with its exquisite fan tracery—the earliest in England—was built between 1351 and 1412.

During the fourteenth century many vestments, church service books and pieces of precious plate were bestowed upon the abbey. Of one abbot it is said that he obtained for the sacrist a large gilt chalice, an image

of the Virgin in ivory, a crystal vessel with a silver foot for holding relics, several vestments and ecclesiastical ornaments, a volume of the legends of the saints, together with other books. Another abbot, Thomas Horton, who had been sacrist, presented "many books, vestments, and vessels of silver, also four silver basins for the High Altar, two large ones for occasions when the abbot celebrated Mass, and two small ones for the use of a priest when he should celebrate; also two silver candlesticks for the same altar, and a gold chalice; also a silver vessel for holy water, with a silver aspergill; also a silver cross, gilt, to place on the altar when the abbot celebrated; also a silver pastoral staff. There were also purchased two sets of vestments."

In 1378 a parliament was held at Gloucester. It commenced on October 22 and lasted till December 16. During the session the King remained sometimes at Gloucester abbey and sometimes in that of Tewkesbury. At all times during these two months the crowd was so great that the monks were put to no little inconvenience and expense. The detailed account which has come down to us says that at times the place "seemed more like a fair than a religious house," and it notes that the grass-plot of the cloister was so trodden by the visitors playing games that not a vestige of green could be seen when the session of Parliament came to an end.

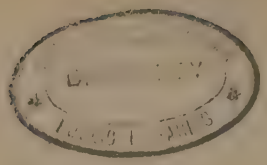
On the Sunday before the close of the parliament, High Mass was sung by the abbot of Gloucester in the presence of the King, the two archbishops, twelve bishops and many noblemen. After Mass the King was

CLOISTER AND LAVATORIUM, GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL

BROOKLYN

entertained in the refectory at a magnificent repast, "set out with great splendour" by the community.

The last abbot, William Malvern or Parker, was elected on May 4, 1515, and his community then consisted of thirty-four monks. The antiquary Browne Willis considers that probably he was got rid of by the royal commissioners before the suppression of the house. His name does not appear on the deed of surrender, which was signed on January 2, 1539, the religious being expelled as soon as possible afterwards. One who deeply felt the sadness of the catastrophe which overwhelmed Gloucester, after its centuries of corporate life, has written thus of the last services held by the monks in their choir: "Having existed for more than eight centuries under different forms, in poverty and in wealth, in meanness and in magnificence, in misfortune and in success, it finally succumbed to the royal will; the day came, and that a dreary winter day, when its last Mass was sung, its last censer waved, its last congregation bent in rapt and lowly adoration before the altar there; and doubtless as the last tones of that day's evensong died away in the vaulted roof, there were not wanting those who lingered in the solemn stillness of the old massive pile, and who, as the lights disappeared one by one, felt that for them there was now a void which could never be filled, because their old abbey, with its beautiful services, its frequent means of grace, its hospitality to strangers and its loving care of God's poor, had passed away like an early morning dream and was gone for ever."



CHAPTER XIII

Jervaulx

IN Wensleydale, between Bedale and Leyburn on the river Eure, stands all that remains of Jervaulx Abbey. The monastery was first founded at a place in the same neighbourhood called Fors, or Dalegrange in 1145 by a few monks of Savigny. Five years later the infant community placed themselves under the Benedictine abbey of Byland in the same county of Yorkshire; and in 1150 an abbot and twelve monks were sent thence to colonize Dalegrange. The superior of the Savigny monks was a skilled physician, named Peter de Quinciaco, and why he and his companions had come to England at all was not understood even at the time. The founder of the new house was Alan, Count of Brittany, and being present when Peter de Quinciaco laid the foundation of the first settlement, he persuaded Roger de Mowbray, the founder of Byland, to emulate his example and assist the monks with further gifts of land and to help them to raise their first wooden oratory.

A subsequent letter from Roger de Mowbray explains how it came to pass that the monks of Savigny afterwards abandoned the house they had thus begun. He had, he says, given them pasturage and the right

to cut timber in his woods at Masham before his first visit to the Holy Land. Not long after, Earl Alan, the chief founder, had gone to his possessions in Brittany, and visiting Savigny had told the abbot and monks there what Peter de Quinciacc was doing in England. The Earl then formally presented the whole of the property to the abbey of Savigny, which very unwillingly the abbot accepted, as he held that the new house should never have been begun without the consent of the mother house. Later on Peter de Quinciaco was continually writing from England or getting others to do so, begging for more monks to be sent over to him. But the abbot of Savigny, remembering what had happened in other cases where monks had been sent from Savigny to England to begin new foundations, wrote to tell Peter and the few he had with him how foolishly he had acted in beginning the house at Wensleydale without previous consultation. The feelings of Peter were hurt, especially as his abbot had declared his desire to get rid of the new place altogether. In 1146 Roger, abbot of Byland, had to go over to Savigny to the General Chapter, and Peter bethought himself of entrusting a letter to his abbot to Abbot Roger's keeping.

The whole question of the new foundation at Wensleydale was raised in the second session of this Chapter, and by the advice of the abbots of Quarre and Neath, who were also at the meeting, it was agreed that the Abbot of Savigny should give the incipient house of Fors to

the Abbey of Byland, the youngest daughter house of Savigny in England, and the nearest to Wensleydale. The Abbot of Quarre was instructed to carry out this judgement and to tell Peter and his companions that they might either remain under the obedience of the Abbot of Byland or return to Savigny. If the place, however, was on inquiry found to be unable to support a community, then it should be retained merely to furnish an additional subsidy to the Abbot of Savigny. These alternatives were put before Peter and his three companions, and after consideration and prayer they came before the Abbot of Quarre, and Peter acting as their spokesman said: "Holy Father of Quarre, we have now sufficiently debated the business that has brought you here. I wish in the first place to inform you that I and my two companions, to whom originally this place was specially given for God's service, have with all our bodies and souls promoted its welfare and increased its substance. Now, indeed, blessed be the Most High! we have five carucates of ploughland, forty cows with their calves, sixteen horses with their foals, given by the Earl of Brittany, five sows with their litters, three hundred sheep, thirty skins in tanning, and wax and oil more than enough, with a little help, for two years. We are certain that we can find bread and beer, cheese and butter for one year and we believe that any abbot and a community of monks can begin on such promise and live till God provides more fully."

JERVAULX ABBEY

BROCKLEY PUBLIC LIBRARIES

After this Peter declared that if the abbot of Byland would send a community and an abbot, with the promise that Fors should continue and be allowed to elect its own abbot in succession, he and his companions would gladly hand over all their possessions to them. This having been promised, Peter de Quinciaco with his two companions and one lay brother renewed their profession to the abbot of Byland; a second lay brother, not wishing to do this, returned at once to Savigny.

One or two years later the abbot of Savigny sent letters to the English houses in union with him ordering them in the name of Pope Eugenius to take the Cistercian Constitution. The promised community of monks had not at that time been sent from Byland, and as there seemed to be some doubt as to the position of the community at Fors under the changed circumstances, the abbot of Byland in 1149 went over to Savigny to consult the abbot. On his way back he remained at Clairvaulx to attend the General Chapter of the Cistercians, presided over by St Bernard himself. He was received with great kindness, and St Bernard ordered that the name of Fors should be inscribed on the list of Cistercian houses. The Abbot of Byland got home for November 1· and immediately set about the task of erecting the new foundation into an abbey. He ordered the cellarer of Byland to purchase a new bell for their own church, and sent the old one to Jervaulx, and at the new year, 1150, he went thither and spent a month in making all necessary preparations for the

advent of the community. Returning, he ordered Peter and his companions to be at Byland for the first Sunday of Lent. On that day in the conventual chapter he appointed John de Kingston the first abbot of the new house, giving him as his community Peter and his two companions and nine monks of Byland, who immediately made their obedience to their new abbot. On March 8, after receiving the usual blessing, the abbot and community set out for their new home, where they were received at Dalegrange by the old benefactors of the place; and here the abbot appointed a prior, and Peter, who knew the place so well, his cellarer. The first years were times of difficulty and trial, and in the fifth year the house nearly came to an end through poverty, as the autumn was wet and it was impossible to gather in the harvest. The monks often discussed the propriety of returning to their old home at Byland, but in the end they were helped in their difficulty by the generosity of the abbot of this latter house and his community. Still the revenues of the abbey were not sufficient to support the inmates, and for a year five of the religious were compelled to return to Byland, and three others to seek shelter at Furness.

Meanwhile Peter, now the cellarer, asked permission to go and interest Count Alan of Brittany in their difficulties. This he did, and the Count at once expressed his intention of materially aiding them when he next came over into Richmond. After a delay of two years he paid his promised visit and enjoyed the

chase on his estates, where the only drawback to his sport was the number of wolves which infested the place. He then came to the abbey and promised liberal help. This, however, he was not destined to give in person, as he shortly after died. His son, Conan, however, took up the work and gave the community a large tract of land at East Witton, and great pasturage on Wensleydale; to this situation near Witton on the Eure the community moved and began to build, and from its situation on the river it first began to be known as Jervaulx.

Of the subsequent history of the monastery little is known until the date of the final suppression. In the year of the Great Pestilence, 1349, the Abbot of Jervaulx died apparently of that disease, but there is no record of the extent of its ravages among the community. Probably Jervaulx at this time suffered the loss of many of its members, even if it was not depleted, as so many religious houses were, by the scourge.

The last abbot, Adam Sedbar, alias Nelson, was elected in 1533. When the Northern Rising took place in 1537, Abbot Sedbar found himself implicated in the charges made against the heads of several abbeys in the north. The chief witness against him was one of the monks of Jervaulx, called Ninian Staveley, himself one of the leaders of the movement and a representative of the swashbuckler element among the insurgents. He was an adventurer who, having compromised himself, endeavoured to save his own neck by turning an infor-

mant. According to his deposition it would appear that during the second rising the abbot had promised to come to the aid of the insurgents with all his monks; he had also, so said Staveley, begged Sir Thomas Percy "to come forward," and had sent to find out whether the Duke of Norfolk was advancing "with arms or no."

On April 27, 1537, Abbot Sedbar was examined in the Tower on these accusations. Being sworn, he admitted that about Michaelmas during the first rising there "came to the garth or court of the abbey" some two or three hundred men. He knew nothing about it at the time, but hearing that their captains, Middleton and Staveley, were asking for him "he conveyed himself by a back door" to a place called "Wilton Fell." He only had a boy with him, and he "bade his other servants get them every man to his own house and save their cattle and goods." He remained thus concealed for four days, only coming home at night; "and for all those days the commons wandered about the said house in the country round about." "At last, hearing that this examinate had said that there should be no servant of his ever after do him services, nor tenant dwell on no land of his, that should go with them, they therefore turned back to Jervaulx, and inquired for this examinate, and they were answered that he was not at home." And they compelled the monks to proceed to the election of another abbot in his place. The monks hesitating, the people said that if they did not proceed to an election within an hour they would burn the house

about their ears. At length the monks sent to seek Abbot Sedbar, and finding him in a great crag on Wilton Fell, begged him to come home to prevent the destruction of the monastery.

"Then for saving of the house this examinate come home, and, about the outer gate, he was torn from his horse and almost killed, they crying, 'Down with the traitor!'" After threatening to kill him they made him come with them and kept him for some days before they allowed him to return to Jervaulx. He denied absolutely that he had given any aid whatever to them. They had indeed taken his servants with them, but he had refused to pay them their wages and "he never sent vituals unto them." The insurgents had tried to force him and his brethren to go with them, but he had refused and had fled to Bolton Castle to Lord Scrope and had remained there till the insurgents were "broken at Richmond." He further denied the special points which Staveley had suggested against him.

At the same time the late abbot of Fountains, William Thirsk, who was then living at Jervaulx and who was subsequently executed, was also examined as to his complicity in the rising. He declared that he remembered well how the insurgents tried to compel the Jervaulx brethren to join them. "Middleton and Staveley," he said, "came in harness to the abbot of Jervaulx, as he and this examinate were in his chamber, and bade them all, their brethren and servants on pain of death, go with them forthwith. And many other

of the commons were in the hall and about the house. And he desired them instantly to suffer him and his brethren to be still, seeing that it was not meet that religious men should go about any such business."

Although there was little enough in these depositions and examinations to implicate the Abbot of Jervaulx in the Northern insurrections, his ultimate fate was hardly doubtful from the first. He was hanged on June 2, 1537, at Tyburn, and by the new interpretation of the law of attainder, the property of his abbey was held to be forfeited to the Crown by the constructive treason of its abbot. "The house of Jervaulx," wrote the King, with keen prevision, to the Earl of Sussex, "is in some danger of suppression by like offence as hath been committed at Whalley." The danger was not long delayed; for at the beginning of June Sir Arthur Darcy informed Crumwell that he had been at the suppression of Jervaulx. "The house within the gate," he writes, "is covered wholly with lead, and there is one of the fairest churches that I have seen, fair meadows and a river running by it, and a great domain." In fact he was so pleased with the place and its possibilities for breeding horses, "for surely the breed of Jervaulx for horses was the tried breed in the north," that he suggested it would make a good stable for the royal stud of mares."

By the energy of Richard Bellasis before the middle of November what Darcy declares to have been "one of the fairest churches that I have seen" had been dese-

crated and demolished. Crumwell had ordered the lead to be pulled forthwith from the roof, and his agent wrote to say that this had been done and that it was melted into "pieces of half fodders; which lead amounteth to the number of eighteen score and five fodders, with thirty-four fodders and a half that was there before. The said lead cannot be conveyed nor carried until the next summer, for the ways in this country are so foul and deep that no carriage can pass in the winter. And as concerning the razing of the house if it be your lordship's pleasure I am minded to let it stand till the spring of the year, because the days are now so short it would be double charges to do it now." As to the bells he writes, "I cannot sell them above fifteen shilling the hundred weight," and he would gladly know whether he should take that price or send them up to London.

By Michaelmas, 1537, the King's official is able to account for receipts from the attainted monastery of Jervaulx exceeding £600. The following year the same property paid into the exchequer £764 13s. 8d., but in that period more than £2,000 had been paid out of this and other attained property in Yorkshire for the fees and payment of knights and squires on the marches of Scotland.

As in the case of other attainted monasteries like Whalley, Glastonbury, Colchester, or Reading the monks of Jervaulx did not receive any pension when they were turned out of their monastery. What be-

came of them is for the most part unknown. In 1585 John Almond, one of them, died at the age of 76 in the Castle of Hull, having been in prison there since 1579. Two years previously Thomas Madde, another Cistercian of Jervaulx, died in prison at York. Of him it is said that in Henry VIII's days he "did take away and hide the head of one of his brethren of the same house, who suffered death in that he would not yield and consent to the royal supremacy." Afterwards he fled to Scotland "where he did remain unto the end of King Edward's reign. He, returning in Queen Mary's reign, did spend his time about Knaresborough in serving God according to his vocation and teaching of gentlemen's children and others."

CHAPTER XIV

St Mary's, York

DOWN by the river at York, and just inside the city walls, stood the abbey of Our Lady St Mary. Comparatively few remains now mark the site of what, before its destruction, was one of the most beautiful churches in medieval England, and "one of the most perfect examples of consummate architecture in the world." The actual ruins are but few: the crumbling wall of the north aisle; a tower-pier cut short at about half its height; a mere fragment of the west wall; and a few stones of the Chapter House still stand, but the enormous mass of fragments, many superbly carved, which have been of late gathered together, manifest even more clearly the beauty of that which was destroyed in the sixteenth century than what still remains standing.

The first beginnings of St Mary's, York, must remain uncertain. According to one account, the Earl of Richmond, in the time of William the Conqueror, founded a house for Benedictines in the suburbs of York. But all authorities appear to admit that William Rufus in 1088, finding the place too straitened for the reception of any convent of size, or projecting a larger one, with his own hand opened the ground for the

foundation of the more spacious building on the site where the ruins may now be seen. His charters granting privileges and immunities naturally cause him to be regarded as the chief founder of the abbey. Other kings followed this example of William II and extended their patronage to the monastery, and many pious noblemen and others continually added to the original foundation, until St Mary's became possessed of a revenue of £1,650 os. 7½d., according to the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of Henry VIII.

The abbey of St Mary's, York, enjoyed the privilege of being one of the two mitred abbeys north of the Trent—the other being Selby—and the abbot was summoned to Parliament as a peer of the realm. It had an even, uneventful history, disturbed only by quarrels as to rights and privileges with the town and with the Archbishop of York. The latter was bound by his official duty to make a formal visitation of the abbey once a year. He could also reform and correct any abuse he found in the house with the consent and counsel of the community and five or six of the canons of his cathedral. These visits were generally carried out with justice and in a spirit of fair dealing on both sides. To take an example: in 1344, William, the Archbishop of York, in making his visitation, raised the question of the right of the abbot and convent to take certain tithes and pensions from so many churches in his diocese. The religious at once produced papal Bulls and the grants of his predecessors in the See,

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ST. MARY'S ABBEY, YORK

allowing them to hold these impropriations; whereupon they were allowed by the prelate and declared good and sufficient. To take another instance: in one of these visitations it became evident to the archbishop that for the regular observance and the avoidance of minor differences in the community, it would be well that there should be a proper customal drawn up, as the book to which all could appeal. He consequently appointed a commission, consisting of two of the community and two canons of the cathedral. Together they composed, and the Archbishop approved, a consuetudinary of ceremonies and music to be observed at St Mary's, which volume was afterwards kept in the abbot's chapel as the official ceremonial to be appealed to whenever it became necessary.

The great church of St Mary's, York, was cruciform, and each of the arms east and west of the central tower consisted of eight bays. It was rebuilt in the second half of the thirteenth-century. Thus in 1270, abbot Simeon de Warwick is said "to have commenced the new work of the choir," which entry in the records affords an indication of the period when this fine specimen of thirteenth-century ecclesiastical architecture was under construction. The foundations of many of the domestic buildings can be easily traced; the Chapter House had three alleys, a very unusual feature; the parlour and slype, or passage to the cemetery, are on the east side and formed the undercroft to the dormitory; the Norman arch of the gatehouse re-

mains on the north. The lower guest house, consisting of a stone basement of the fourteenth century and a superstructure of the fifteenth, is near the river.

One or two interesting little particulars in the history of St Mary's appear in the annals of the abbey of Meaux. In 1210, on the election of Hugh as abbot of the latter house, the convent found themselves unable to pay the fine of a thousand marks demanded by the King's officials, who thereupon seized some of their lands and sold them. By this alienation the monastery became so impoverished that the monks had to disperse. At this time most of the other Cistercian houses in the country were also too poor to receive their brethren of Meaux, and so the abbot of St Mary's, York, offered to give some of them shelter. The good relation between the two houses was somewhat disturbed in the middle of this same thirteenth century by a dispute about the fishing in Wathsand and Hornsey meres. Meaux had paid a rent to St Mary's for the privilege, but ultimately there was an appeal to the law and, finally, to a combat between the champions of the two convents. Whilst this wager of battle was proceeding, an agreement was come to by the parties. In further negotiations, however, they again fell out, and once more the settlement was referred to the two champions to fight out the cause to the end. A stay, however, was allowed in order that the Meaux claimants might have the part of the mere they held to be theirs marked out by stakes. Still no agreement could be come to, and the

two champions commenced their wager of battle at York. They fought, says the chronicler, *a mane usque ad vesperam*—from morning till night—when the "athlete" of Meaux little by little lost his strength, and St Mary's was adjudged to have the victory.

From the same source we know that in 1319, when 15,000 Scots attacked Yorkshire, the clerics of York were not backward in defending themselves. The Archbishop of York with his cross-bearer, the Bishop of Ely, the Chancellor, the Abbot of St Mary's, the Dean of York and others were present at the battle of Milton on the Swale. The English suffered terribly, says the record, and "many priests and clerics" with the Mayor of York were killed and more than 3,000 men were drowned in trying to cross the river. The Abbot of St Mary's, the Bishop of Ely and the Archbishop, were saved by timely flight. The cross of the latter, however, was lost for some days.

The last abbot, William Thornton or Dent, was appointed in 1530. The royal visitation, prior to the Parliament of 1536, was begun in Yorkshire in the January of that year, only a few weeks, indeed, before the meeting of the Houses in London. On January 13, Layton, one of the most diligent of the visitors, wrote to Crumwell from St Mary's. "This day," he says, "we begin with St Mary's Abbey, whereat we suppose to find much evil disposition, both in the abbot and the convent, whereof, God willing, I shall certify you in my next letter." This expectation hardly displays

the judicial spirit; the writer expects to find what he has come to find, and will be only too pleased to be able to write his accusations in the next communication. Whatever may have been the result of this so-called examination, St Mary's, York, did not come within the £200 a year limit of corruption fixed by the Act dissolving the lesser houses. As it was one of, what the preamble of that Act calls, "the Great and Solemn Houses" of the realm, in it, according to Henry's declaration, religious life was right well kept and observed.

A few years later, however, this good character did not avail, and finally the abbot and the convent gave way to the pressure exerted upon them and surrendered their house on November 26, 1539. The wrecking of the noble buildings at once began; the roofing of the church excited the cupidity of the spoilers, as it was estimated to be worth £800; the conventual buildings are said to have been blown up and the ground levelled, in order to erect on the site a royal palace for the northern parts. Immediately after Henry's death the greater portion of the royal palace was destroyed and what was left, together with the old abbot's lodgings, was turned into a dwelling for the "Lord President of the North," which was changed a great deal in the time of James I and Charles.

During this time probably the roofless skeleton of the once-glorious church still stood more or less intact. In 1701, however, York Castle, standing much in need

of reparation, found a ready quarry of stone in the walls of old St Mary's. King George I also gracefully granted to Beverley Minster and St Mary's, Beverley, as much stone from the ruin as they needed for their extensive repairs. Lastly, in the nineteenth century, to complete the destruction, permission was granted to erect lime-kilns, into which for years went the worked stones which would now have been without price. It was not till 1827 that anyone thought of raising a protest against this vandalism.

CHAPTER XV

Milton

THE Benedictine Abbey of Milton in Dorsetshire was founded in the year 939 by King Athelstan. It was called variously Middleton, Milton Abbas or Milton, and was dedicated first to St Mary and St Michael the Archangel. To these patrons were afterwards added St Sampson and St Branwalader, as the church in the early days of its existence became possessed of considerable relics of these Saints.

The abbey had its origin in the tragic death of Edwin, the brother of Athelstan, for which that king held himself in part blameworthy. When Athelstan began his reign in the year 924 he found himself the practical master of nearly all England, and within a few years of his accession he had also imposed his rule on Northumbria and Wales, and had driven the Britons of Cornwall westward from Exeter. Athelstan had three brothers, Edmund, Eadred, and Edwin. The two first succeeded him on the throne; the third was accused of conspiring against him. Athelstan, acting impulsively on bad advice, expelled Edwin from England, putting him with his squire only on board a boat without either oars or sail, and setting him adrift at Dover. After being tossed about for some time on the English seas,

Edwin is said to have thrown himself overboard when near the Norman coast; but his squire, abiding in the ship, came safely to land near Ushant, with the body of the prince, which was carried to St Bertin's Abbey and there buried. Athelstan was filled with remorse for what he had done to bring about the death of his brother Edwin, and he determined in expiation to build a monastery for Benedictine monks at Milton, and to dedicate it to our Lady and St Michael. Shortly afterwards he buried the body of his mother, Amphelisa in this place, and continued during life to manifest his interest in the new foundation.

Amongst other precious gifts the founder bestowed upon the abbey of Milton were many relics of saints, etc., which he brought from Rome and Brittany. In the list of these we find "the arm and other bones of St Sampson," and the arm of St Branwalader the bishop. These and other relics, "at great cost and labour," he procured and placed in gilt shrines in the abbey church to obtain prayers for the soul of his brother Edwin and for that of his mother, who lay buried in the place he had founded.

The connexion between the abbey of Milton and that of St Bertin is obvious. Edwin was buried at the latter monastery, and his name was connected by the founder with Milton. It is more than probable, therefore, that the monks from St Bertin came over the sea and formed the first community settled at Milton. As in so many of the English monasteries, during the

Danish invasion, the monastic form of life appears to have died out at Milton, since the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle under the year 964 states that King Edgar replaced the secular canons, who were then living there, by monks.

In 1309 a fire of great magnitude destroyed the church, which had been built in the twelfth century, and most of the domestic buildings. The church was subsequently rebuilt as we may see it now. It is 132 feet long by 61 feet; the tower is 101 feet high, and the transepts are 107 feet across, the south wing having three bays and the north only two. The nave was apparently never rebuilt. The eastern portion of four bays is groined and retains its rood-loft, thirty-two stalls and a reredos of 1492. Of the domestic buildings only the refectory with rich oak ceiling and screen of the end of the fifteenth century is now in existence.

William Middleton, the last abbot but one, who ruled his house from 1481 till his resignation in 1525, did much to repair and beautify his house. He founded a free school also at Milton Abbas in the reign of Henry VII, and he re-glazed the windows and otherwise ornamented the interior of the abbey church. On the reredos just referred to there is an inscription asking for prayers for himself and another monk who had collected the money to pay for the decoration. The abbot's rebus, a W with a crosier through it, and a mill on a tun, is frequently seen on the buildings.

John Stephens, *alias* Bradley, a monk of Milton, was

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MILTON ABBAS

elected as William Middleton's successor in 1525, and on March 23, 1538, he was consecrated suffragan Bishop of Shaftesbury. On March 21, the feast of their patron, St Benedict, in the year 1539, the King's commissioners, John Tregonwell and John Smythe, came to Milton and received from the abbot and community the surrender of their monastery into the King's hands. The late Abbot Stephens, *alias* Bradley, Bishop of Shaftesbury, and twelve monks signed the surrender, and obtained pensions for their lives.

The same John Tregonwell, on payment of £1,000 to the treasurer of the Court of Augmentations, obtained a grant of the whole property of Milton Abbey. It included the site of the entire monastery, the church and tower, the cemetery of the late monastery, all houses, buildings, barns, stables, granges, dovecots, gardens, orchards, pleasure grounds, ponds, stews, etc. As the whole was included in one grant, this for a time probably saved the buildings from destruction. Hutchins, the historian of Dorset, says that all the monastic buildings, except the hall and the church, were taken down only in 1771. Up to that time they stood near the church and formed a long square. Speaking of what they were before that time, the same writer says: "The north front was a very low antient range of buildings with small narrow windows, perhaps the dormitory or cells for the monks. You entered by a large gate into a small court, whose old buildings were all very irregular in form and height, as indeed was the

old fabric; under a window opposite the porch was a W with a crown over it and an M with a crosier through it, and between them 1529.... At the east end of the court was the old abbey kitchen pulled down in 1737. The roof was vaulted with stone and supported by a massy stone pillar, and it had two very large chimneys at each end. The western side seems to have been the abbot's lodgings. The cloisters were placed between the south end of the court and the lower part of the north aisle. The last remains appear to have been taken down in 1730. Under the garden wall, by the road that leads from the town to the abbey, was a foot-walk wall, called Ambry wall; perhaps it was the way to the almonry where the poor received their alms of the abbey. Near this was the ancient abbey barn, which had two porches or threshing-floors projecting beyond it; in was 250 feet long by 32 feet broad. It was all tiled, and much of it rebuilt in 1751."

One not uninteresting feature of the old monastery still survives in the long flight of steps from the present lawn up the hill-side to the chapel of St Catherine. It was erected, no doubt, in imitation of the Scala Sancta in Rome, and the indulgence granted in the fifteenth century to such as would make the penitential exercise of mounting these steps is still recorded in an inscription over the door of the chapel at the top. Sir Frederick Treves thus describes the situation of "one of the most elegant minsters in England": "Milton Abbas is a model village grown old. Its story

is very simple. When Joseph Damer, afterwards Earl of Dorchester, became possessed of the Milton estates, he found the ancient village squatted indecently near to the spot where he intended to build his mansion. With the fine quarter-deck high-handedness of the eighteenth-century squire, he ordered the offensive object to be removed, and so it was. The old untidy hamlet (which had surrounded the abbey) was entirely demolished as soon as the new Milton Abbas had been erected well out of sight of the great house. This was in 1786.

"The quaint and all-of-one-pattern village is not the only surprising thing in this part of the country. From one end of the toy town a road leads into a wood, into whose shades it dives deeper and deeper, as does many a road in the children's story books. It comes in time to the edge of the coppice, where is a great grass valley ringed about by hills. The woods creep down to the foot of the slope so as to form an amphitheatre of trees. Here, on a lawn and amid the flower-gardens of a private mansion, is a cathedral! No other building is in sight. It is a strange thing to meet with—a great grey house and a great grey church, standing side by side in a hollow in a wood. The place is a solitude, green and still, shut off from the world by a rustling ring of wooded hills. Such is Milton Abbey."

CHAPTER XVI

Netley

ON the low ground bordering Southampton Water and almost hidden in a luxuriant growth of trees are the ruins of Netley Abbey. The place is not far from, is, indeed, almost a suburb now of the ever-growing port of Southampton. The ships that are perpetually passing down the water on their way to every part of the world, or are returning up it bearing the peoples and products of lands unheard of and undreamt of when Netley was at its prime, pass and repass this silent and ivy-grown memorial of a life, strange perhaps now, but which was very real indeed some centuries ago, when the great busy port of to-day was yet a small and unimportant harbour.

Netley, otherwise called Lettley, Edwardstow or *Laetus locus*—happy place—was the home of Cistercian monks. It was a house of royal foundation, for Henry III established it in 1232 in honour of St Mary and St Edward. The first monks came from Beaulieu, the Cistercian Abbey over the water in the New Forest, which, although it had been established so short a time, had yet increased already in numbers so much as to be able to send out a colony of brethren to Henry's new foundation. Netley was never, apparently, very pro-

NETLEY ABBEY: THE EAST WINDOW

sperous, so far as worldly wealth goes, and according to the taxation of Pope Nicholas the total amount of its temporalities was only £17. Although it subsequently received some further endowment from Edmund Earl of Cornwall at the time of the Dissolution in 1536, its clear income only amounted to £100 12s. 8d.

Netley, consequently, was in no sense an important monastery, and little or nothing is really known of its story, which was evidently the usual history of an observant house, in which its members, apparently never more numerous than twelve, devoted themselves to the duties of their state. Indeed, in one way this secluded spot has attracted probably more notice in late years than it did in the days of its prosperity. The very picturesqueness of the situation, the attractive beauty of the ruins with their setting of green trees and shrubs has caused it to be considered one of the typical ruined abbeys of England, and has attracted to it crowds of visitors from all parts of the world. It was Sir Horace Walpole who said of these moss-grown stones: "They are not ruins of Netley but of Paradise. Oh! the Purple Abbots! what a spot they had chosen to slumber in."

The beautiful church erected by these "Purple Abbots" measured 211 feet in length by 58 feet broad, with a transept 128 feet across. The nave was of eight bays, and had a rood-screen with two processional doors in it; the presbytery was of four bays and had its aisles. In either transept there were three altars, and the vaulting still remains in the eastern aisle of the south tran-

sept. The cloister of the monastery was 114 feet square; on the east side the positions may still be marked of the sacristy below the library, the vestibule of the Chapter House, the slype or passage to the infirmary, the common house formerly vaulted in two alleys, and a small entry to the calefactory which contains a thirteenth-century fireplace. On the south side of the cloister was the refectory, the Early English door of which still remains.

Netley was one of the smaller religious houses, and hence its destruction was decreed by Act of Parliament in 1536, which dissolved all houses having an income of less than £200 a year. It may be useful to explain what this bald statement means. In September, 1535, the King appointed commissioners to go round about the monasteries and send in reports, with the intention of applying to Parliament to suppress some of them at least and to hand over their property to his Majesty. The chief members of this commission were Leyton, Legh, Aprice and London, and they went rapidly round the country, sending in letters, reports and official accusations against the good name of individuals called *compertes*, to Crumwell. It must have been some time in the late autumn of 1535 that the visitors came to Netley, and judging from other cases it did not take them very long to draw up their report. We have not got it; but it may be taken for granted that it was sufficiently dreadful.

Parliament met on February 4, 1536, and solely upon

NETLEY ABBEY: THE CLOISTERS

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the King's declaration that the smaller religious houses were in a bad moral state, whilst, "thanks be to God," the great and solemn abbeys were all that could be desired, Parliament fixed the pecuniary limit of moral delinquency at £200 a year, and with indignation decreed the suppression of all religious houses with an income below that sum, giving the King all their corporate property. According to the preamble of the Act, it is certain that there was no inquiry worthy of the name, and that the measure was passed solely on the strength of the King's "declaration" that he knew the charges against the smaller houses to be true.

The money "measure of turpitude" fixed by the Act made it necessary as a preliminary to inquire what houses fell within this limit of £200 a year. Commissioners were consequently appointed to inquire and report. This time some at least of the commissioners were the gentry of the county; the rest were officials of the Augmentation Office, newly created in the expectation of the large sums likely to come to the crown by the operation of the Act of Suppression. Thus, for Hampshire on May 30, 1536, Sir John Worseley, John and George Poulet, and William Berners were directed to hold these inquiries, and this is their report about Netley: It "is a large building situate upon the rivage of the seas, to the King's subjects and strangers travelling the same seas great relief and comfort." Although its income was under £200 a year, still the "seven priests" living there were "by report of good conversation."

This favourable report from the gentry of the neighbourhood did not avail to save poor Netley from destruction. In February 1537 the blow fell. The abbot had been made to take the abbatial office at Beaulieu, and the community were actually without a head. The process of suppression was much the same in every case, and the work was not done in a day, the existing accounts showing that it took from six to ten weeks to conduct a dissolution. The chief commissioners paid two official visits during the progress of the work. On the first occasion they announced to the community and its dependents their impending doom, called for and defaced the seal—the symbol of corporate existence, without which nothing in the way of business could be transacted—desecrated the church, took possession of the best plate and church vestments "unto the King's use," measured the lead upon the roofs, counted the bells, and appraised the goods and chattels of the community.

They then passed on to the scene of their next operations, leaving behind them under-officials and workmen to carry out the designed destruction by stripping the roofs and pulling down the gutters and pipes, melting the lead into pigs, throwing down the bells and breaking them with sledge-hammers and packing the metal into barrels ready for the coming of the speculator. This was followed by the work of collecting the furniture and selling it by public auction or by private tender. When all this had been done, the commis-

NETLEY ABBEY, LOOKING WEST

sioners returned to audit the accounts and to satisfy themselves that the work of destruction had been accomplished to the King's contentment.

An instance of this may be seen in the case of Netley. From the first arrival of the Royal Commissioners in February 1537 to the final handing over the ruins to a keeper the dissolution of the abbey took ten weeks. The accounts show that, first, plate to the value of £45 11s. was sent off to the King. The ornament of the beautiful church, when sold piecemeal, fetched £38 19s. 8d. A man named Michael Lister speculated in all the movables of the house, for which he paid a lump sum of £10 13s. 4d. The same adventurer in partnership with another got all the cattle, corn, etc. for only a little over £100. When the wreckers had finished there were £21 worth of bell-metal and £40 worth of lead cast into "fodders" left on the ground to sell. It is not difficult to understand where the choir-stall wood and the timbers of the roof went to when the need to melt the lead was pressing; and judging from other instances, it would not be surprising to know that many a goodly missal and ancient choir-book used at Netley went into the flames of the fires lit in chancel and nave to keep the pot a-boiling. Perhaps even the flames may account for the precious volume noted by Leland in the library at Netley—*Rhetorica Ciceronis*.

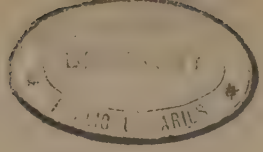
The Cistercian monks who lived at Netley were soon disposed of by the commissioners. The abbot, as I have said, had been appointed to the abbey of Beau-

lieu, which it will be remembered was the mother house of Netley, so, as the monks of the latter house had no wish to have "capacities" and leave the religious life, the most easy way to get rid of them was to send them all to Beaulieu. We can, perhaps, imagine their feelings as they were shipped across the Southampton water on the first stage of their short journey to their new home. Probably from the boat, as they looked back over the waters in their passage, they were able to see the smoke and flames rising from their church and monastery, and by this token to know that the work of wrecking and destroying all that they had loved so well was in full progress.

According to Browne Willis, the great destruction of the abbey church commenced about the period when the buildings were inhabited by the Earl of Huntingdon, who converted the nave or west end into a kitchen and offices. Soon after the beginning of the eighteenth century the materials of the whole fabric were sold to a Mr Walter Taylor, a builder of Southampton, but an accident which soon after befell Mr Taylor saved the ruins. At this time it would appear that the church remained in an almost perfect condition, although the transept had been used as a stable and floors had been introduced at various levels in the building.

Later on, the place passed into the possession of Sir Nathaniel Holland, whose lady, desiring to have in her park "an elegant ruin," according to the taste of

the eighteenth century, removed the entire north transept and erected it near her house for that purpose. In spite of everything, however, Netley remains one of the most fascinating monastic monuments in the country.



CHAPTER XVII

Pershore

OF the five great Worcestershire Abbeys Gloucester and Worcester are placed on the Severn, Pershore and Evesham on the Avon, and Tewkesbury on the junction of the two rivers. Pershore stands in the garden-like county of Worcestershire midway between Evesham and Worcester. The foundation of Pershore as a monastery is somewhat uncertain. It would seem, however, that about the year 682 Oswald, a nephew of Ethelred, King of Mercia, established there a house of monks. During the dark times of the Danish invasions nothing is known about Pershore; but some time before 975 St Oswald, with the help of King Edgar, evidently re-established the monks in their old place, which, according to some, here as elsewhere, was occupied by seculars.

Edgar's charter, issued apparently about 972, dedicates the church and monastery of Pershore to the "Mother of our Lord, Mary ever a Virgin, to St Peter, chief of the Apostles and his fellow-apostle Paul." The monks dwelling there were to have the right of electing their abbot after the death of the then Abbot Fulbert, who had been appointed to begin the monastery; and, as far as possible, Edgar restored to them the lands which

had been taken from them in the past troubles. The church and domestic buildings were at this time made of wood and were more than once destroyed by fire. An entry in an old manuscript states that in 976 a "consul nequissimus," named Ælfer, "wickedly destroyed the church of Pershore and many other churches which King Edgar and Ethelwold had built in England." It was again burnt down in about the year 1000, and after two years occupied in rebuilding, it was, according to the chronicle, once more used for monastic divine service in 1002.

In this early period, before the Conquest, and probably about the time of Edgar, Pershore had another benefactor called Alwald, Earl Wada, "who in honour of the Mother of God restored the monastery of Pershore which had been destroyed by wicked and unbelieving men. Having given £100 to Ailgira—probably Eadgyfa—Abbess of Winchester, she presented him with relics of the Holy Virgin Eadburga and he translated them to Pershore placing them with great devotion in a golden shrine beautifully worked." Here, says the chronicler, the sanctity of the saint was manifested by so many miracles that within a year a hundred sick people had been cured of various infirmities. In this way, "more than in Winchester where the greater part of her body rested," the Saint magnified her power. In process of time the name of St Eadburga was added to the dedication title of Pershore.

Between the re-establishment of the abbey by King

Edgar, about 972, and the survey of Doomsday by the Conqueror, a century later, it seems to have lost in some way or other a considerable portion of its possessions. In the Conqueror's survey many of the places in Worcestershire given to Pershore by the charter of King Edgar are found entered among the Worcestershire possessions of Westminster Abbey. William of Malmesbury expressly states that it lost fully half its property: part he says, had been taken by the great, part lost by the neglect of the monks, but the greatest part of all had been bestowed by King Edward the Confessor and King William on Westminster. Even some property in Pershore itself had been granted to the new foundation. At this time the revenue of the abbey appears to have amounted to only £79, only two-thirds of what it was during the reign of the Confessor. King John by his charter secured certain lands and possessions to the Abbey of Pershore, now called the church of "St Mary and St Eadburga the virgin."

In 1223, on St Urban's day, the abbey was burnt a second time. The place was undergoing some repairs, and apparently in the usual way, through the carelessness of some workmen, the fire originated which consumed the entire monastery. The rebuilding was taken in hand immediately, but the church was not consecrated till 1239. Half a century later, in 1288, a third fire involved not only the abbey but most of the town. It began in the abbey bakehouse or brewery and the bell tower of the church caught, after which it quickly

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PERSHORE ABBEY

spread and consumed the entire church and more than forty houses of the town.

In this last fire, probably, the register of the estates and the "evidences" of the privileges and customs of the monastery were consumed. The loss was serious, and in consequence a commission to ascertain the contents of the lost papers was appointed by the crown and witnesses were examined on the subject. The Prior Walter was able to produce certain copies of many of the documents, which had been saved, and which he testified exactly represented the originals, as he had frequently examined both together. In proof of exemption from the ordinary jurisdiction of the bishop of Worcester, he said he remembered on one occasion, when bishop Manger came with the intention of ordaining clerics in their church, they produced their privilege, and he was obliged to go to the chapel of St Andrew, which was in the monks' cemetery. Besides the prior, fifteen other monks were examined in this commission. Four of them are described as "old men," one, not among the "senes," claims to have been constantly a monk in the cloisters of Evesham during sixty years, and three others had been monks more than thirty years.

The choir of the church, destroyed on St Urban's day, 1223, was built up by Abbot Gervaise and vaulted by his successor. The nave has been destroyed with the exception of the thirteenth-century door to the cloisters. The fine decorated lantern tower, rising 36

feet above the roof, was built in 1331. St Eadburga's chapel still remains; the eastern arm above the transepts measures 102 feet, and is now used as the church. The transepts which are gone were 160 feet across, and the nave, which anciently served as the parish church, was 180 feet long by 60 feet broad. The entire length of the church was probably 250 feet.

The last abbot was John Stonewell or Stonywell, who was elected in 1527. Wood says that he was a native of Stonywell in Staffordshire, and "being much addicted to learning and religion," he was sent as a youth to Pershore. From his monastery he was sent to Gloucester College at Oxford, where the monks of Pershore had their own lodging for students. Later on he became prior of Gloucester College, took his degree of Doctor in Divinity and was abbot of his monastery. Later again he became a suffragan bishop under the title of *Episcopus Poletensis*, continuing still to act as abbot of Pershore. He died in 1553 and was buried according to his will in a chapel he had built in the parish church of Longdon. For the use of this chapel and the parishioners of Longdon he left all his books, his two chalices, his cruets, holy water stock, vestments, albs, altar cloths and other things belonging to his private chapel at Longdon.

Although the name of John Stonewell appears on the pension lists as superior, there is some difficulty in understanding exactly who was the abbot at the last. In the Crumwell letters are six or seven from a John

Poleton, who signs himself abbot of Pershore. This possibly may have been his signature as Bishop Poletensis, and the same appears in the abbot's signature in 1534. He writes about the pension to be paid to his predecessor, sends Crumwell a present of £10, and certainly had something to say at the Dissolution, since he writes: "through the action of my predecessor and three others the community are not content with their present stipend, and grumble constantly 'at this visitation.' Hence I shall be glad if you will assign to each priest yearly £6 13s. 4d., to each young monk £5 and to the prior £10, for their whole 'finding stipend.'" The writer also says that he had already told Dr Layton of his willingness to resign his house and states that the King's letters had ordered him to pay at once £93 15s. to his "antecessor."

At this time, when every item of information or accusation was eagerly listened to by the crown agents, any discontented monk knew that he might, perhaps, "make for himself" by a timely complaint in the right quarter. In this way there were depositions laid against the abbot of Pershore for speaking against the King's proceedings. Another complaint, couched in more general terms, was sent up to Crumwell by one of the Pershore community, Richard Beerly, who wished to leave the monastery. He did not believe that what was called St Benet's rule was anything more than vain superstition. The monks, according to him, were a thoroughly bad lot in every way; they neglected their

choir duties "with many other vices they use, which I have no leisure now to express. Also abbots, monks, priests do little or nothing to put out of books the bishop of Rome's name, for I myself do know in divers books where his name and his usurped power upon us is." Richard Beerly, the writer of the above letter, signed the acknowledgement of the Royal Supremacy as the last of the community, and as his name does not appear on the pension document at all, no doubt he was allowed to have his way and leave the monastery.

The suppression of Pershore was probably carried out in 1539. No deed of surrender appears in the archives of the Record Office or is to be found on the Close Rolls, but it is probable that the actual surrender would have taken place about the same time as that of the neighbouring monastery of Evesham, which was in November 1539. The ministers' accounts show that from the various sales of the goods, etc., of Pershore, the royal agents received one year £541 2s. 8½d., and the second year £71 1s. The portion of the church that still exists was saved by the inhabitants of the town, who paid £400 for it to the crown.

CHAPTER XVIII

Rievaulx

FEW views are more fascinating than that of the ruins of Rievaulx seen from the great grass terrace above them and through the woods which clothe the hillside to the east and north. The abbey lies in a hollow on the bank of the little river Rie in Yorkshire, just where three valleys meet, and the Rie draws off two other streams with it and carries them together towards the larger Derwent. Though now there is a sense of peace and security in the valley of Rhidal, even whilst the gaunt skeleton of the church lifts its roofless gables and broken pillars to the heavens, it is quite possible to picture the place before the civilizing presence of the white monks had set its mark upon hollow and hill, as the *locus horroris et vastæ solitudinis*, the "awe-inspiring and solitary place," it is described to be in the earliest account we have of it.

In 1123 St Bernard sent some of his monks of the Cistercian Order from Clairvaux to England to make a foundation in this place. Three years later Walter Espec, a man of good position, gave the Cistercians as their first home in Yorkshire a place called Blackmore, in the woods not far from Hemelac, now called Helmesley. There in 1131 they began their religious life calling

the new foundation "Our Lady of Rievaulx." In 1136 the same generous benefactor established the Cistercian house of Wardon in Bedfordshire, and then in 1150, giving up his property to his children, he retired to Rievaulx and lived there with the monks for two years before his death in 1152.

The first abbot of Rievaulx was a monk named William, one of St Bernard's own disciples. He immediately commenced the building of the monastery, and devoted himself at the same time to the training of his monks. In the Cistercian annals this abbot is specially noted for the holiness of his life; and in one list of the early Cistercians he is even called by the name of the "Blessed William." Abbot William was succeeded in 1150 by his more celebrated disciple St Ælred, one of the first Englishmen to join the community after its coming to settle at Rievaulx. Very early in his religious career Ælred was appointed to take charge of the novices, and later was sent out in charge of a colony from Rievaulx which was to establish itself at Revesby or Rewesby, in Lincolnshire. Ælred was a writer of considerable repute, both as an historian and as a master of the spiritual life. The history of "The Battle of the Standard" is known only through his description and the *Genealogia Regum Anglorum* was composed to instruct Prince Henry, afterwards King Henry II, in the history of the Saxon Kings. St Ælred suffered all his life from ill-health, and for years before he died he was hardly ever free from pain. One picture we get of him

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RIEVAULX ABBEY: EARLY MORNING

whilst Abbot of Rievaulx, a short time before his death, is that of a monk wrapped in a cloak, sitting on a mat spread on the floor before the fire. He is racked with pain, and so doubled up that his head rests almost between his knees.

Besides Revesby, of which mention has already been made, Rievaulx established the more celebrated house of Melrose, in Scotland. It is said that it was the beauty of the life led at Rievaulx that induced some of the monks of St Mary's, York, to yearn for the same and to leave their own cloister for Fountains in search for it.

The church is 343 feet long, and on account of the situation of the ground between the steep hill and the river Rie, it has been set north and south. The choir and chancel occupy seven bays; the nave is 166 feet long and the crossing arch 70 feet high. The transepts are partly Norman, the upper portion being Early English. The refectory, built over some cellarage, shows the remains of a reading pulpit, and there are vestiges more or less distinct of the dormitory and other domestic buildings.

The story of Rievaulx is that of a house which went on in the even tenor of its Cistercian ways. No difficulty other than occasional differences as to tithes and pensions and taxes appears to have troubled the calm serenity of the monks in their peaceful valley on the banks of the Rie. It was by no means, however, an idle or useless life that they led in their seclusion, although perhaps, with the exception of Abbot Ælred they have

left us but little evidence of their literary activity. Their daily and nightly round of service would probably prove more than sufficient for most of us who live in the twentieth century. To rise at midnight, night after night; to take part for a couple of hours of the night, winter and summer, year in, year out, in the solemn chanting in the church; then to return to bed, to make up the night's rest that had been broken, only to be roused once more in the very early morning to continue the round of God's praises, with practically little cessation, till the midday meal; to sit in the unwarmed cloister and study; to read books not of choice but those appointed; to labour for a time for exercise and recreation in the garden or in the field; to have long fasts and abstinences; to keep hours of silence; and to do all these things, not as an experiment, or for a day or a week, but for a lifetime, required a real calling and real enthusiasm. It was a life that could only be lived at all in virtue of the help derived from the thought that God had given the soul His personal summons to serve Him in this way. We may—no doubt many in these days will—consider such a life very unnecessary and very useless; but at least we may recognize that it was not a slothful life nor yet an idle one, and that years and centuries of such a life were passed without any record except that entered in the Book of Life. It is only the trouble, the difficulty and the scandal that has found its way into the pages of *Register* or chronicle; the daily routine of duty is passed by without a notice or comment.

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RIEVAULX ABBEY FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

The last abbot of Rievaulx was Richard Blyton, appointed when the clouds which portended the storm that overwhelmed the religious houses in the sixteenth century were already gathering. There were, indeed, reports and prophecies about the impending catastrophe rife in the neighbourhood of Rievaulx, and men were thought to be casting envious eyes upon the property of the monks long before the end came. The following lines were actually quoted in the abbey before the dissolution:

> Two men came riding over Hackney way,
> The one on a black horse, the other on a grey;
> The one unto the other did say
> Loo yonder *stood* Revess, that fair abbay.

To these lines in the manuscript is appended the following note: "Henry Cawton, a monk, some time of Reves abbey in Yorkshire, affirmed that he had often read this in a manuscript belonging to that abbey, containing many prophecies, and was extant there before the Dissolution. But when he or any other of his fellows read it, they used to throw away the book in anger, as thinking it impossible ever to come to pass." Henry Cawton, *alias* Thirsk, was one of the monks who signed the deed of surrender on December 3, 1539.

There had been considerable difficulty with the previous abbot, probably about 1535, in regard to his refusal to carry out the King's desires. He had shown himself very independent, had pleaded exemption from

such visitations as Henry proposed, and even the abbot of Fountains, who was called in to try and bring him to a better mind, failed to do so. He gave a protest in Latin, and said that if the King had jurisdiction the letters were evidently obtained by fraud and surreptitiously, and "was from Mr Crumwell only." Of course this was sufficient; it was impossible to tolerate such "dissolute living," since "this rebellious mind at this time is so radicate, not only in him, but also in many of the religious."

All this and much more one of Crumwell's agents writes to his master. The sequel does not appear, but the abbot, William Helmesly, who had held office since 1513, was somehow compelled to resign and Richard Blynton was appointed in his stead. William Helmesly does not admit that his act was rightly called a "resignation," and in a letter, addressed to Crumwell himself, he speaks of his having been "deposed." A difficulty subsequently arose about the pension that was promised him, and the abbots of Fountains and Byland were appointed by Crumwell to determine the amount. This they did at Ripon, where, having discussed the matter with the actual abbot and his predecessor, they fixed the pension at £44 a year.

The commissioners to take surrenders of religious houses arrived in Yorkshire at the beginning of December 1539. Their names were George Lawson, Richard Bellassis, William Blithman and James Rokeby. On the fifteenth of that month they wrote to

RIEVAULX ABBEY FROM THE TERRACE

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Crumwell from York that they had "quietly taken the surrender," and dissolved five or six abbeys and friaries and had arranged about the safe custody of the lead and bells. One of the houses mentioned was Rievaulx, which these agents had reached from Byland on December 3, 1539. The accounts of these officials subsequently presented to the Augmentation Office afford us some particulars. The goods of the abbey when sold produced £281 5s. 4d.; the lead from the roofs and gutters had been melted down to 140 fodders, and there were five bells, whether broken up or still whole is not stated. The plate of the abbey is set down as 522 ounces, including ten chalices weighing 185 ounces. Of these items the plate had been sent up to London, and also £181 5s. 4d. had been paid to the royal treasury. Pensions had been promised to the abbot and twenty-three religious, and at the time of the account these had been paid. The abbot also had been given the debts due to the house. In a subsequent pension list the name of the late abbot is found set down as having a claim for his promised pension of £44.

The account likewise mentions that at Rievaulx there were ninety-one retainers of all kinds, besides the "kitchen-boy," who received two shillings on his dismissal, Thomas the plumber and six chorister boys, who got three shillings each. When the Dissolution had been effected, the ruins were left to decay. The very seclusion of the spot, perhaps, has served to preserve the

ruin better than we might have expected after three-and-a-half centuries of neglect. Even fallen, moss-grown and damp-stained as it is, the choir of Rievaulx church remains one of the most glorious works of English medieval architecture.

RIEVAULX: CHURCH AND REFECTORY

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CHAPTER XIX

Romsey

ROMSEY was an ancient abbey of nuns pleasantly placed on the banks of the Test in Hampshire. At one time, no doubt, the ground round about was marshy, and the church and domestic buildings were set on an island or raised ground in the surrounding low-lying country, always of a swampy nature, and at times, when the Test overstepped its bounds, practically impassable. This, at least, is what we should expect from the nature of the situation as we survey it to-day, and indeed it is what the name of Romsey, or "Reed Island," would convey to us.

The abbey was Benedictine, and, according to some authorities, was founded by a Saxon nobleman named Ethelwold in the reign of King Edward the Elder for a community of nuns placed under the care of Elfleda, Ethelwold's daughter. We are on surer ground when we come to the reign of King Edgar. In 967 the monastery, which had previously been destroyed, was rebuilt, and the new community were placed under the Abbess Merwenna. In the same year the church was finished and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and St Elfleda at Whitsuntide in the King's presence.

Peter Langtoft, writing in the fourteenth century, whilst praising Edgar because:

> Mikille he wirschipped God and served our Lady
> The abbey of Rumsaye he feffed richly,

says that he placed there a hundred nuns, and though this may have been at the time somewhat of a poetical licence, at the time he wrote a hundred may well have been the number of the religious in the cloister of Romsey, and we know that at one election of an abbess about this period ninety nuns gave their votes.

Before the end of the tenth century it seems most probable that Romsey suffered, if not extinction, at least great destruction at the hands of the Danes. In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under the year 994 we read that Olaf and Sweyn came to London on September 8 with ninety-four ships. They were repulsed and sailed down the Thames, "and then they went thence and wrought the greatest evil that ever any army could do, in burning and in harrying and in manslayings, as well by the sea coast as in Essex and in Kent and in Sussex and in Hampshire, etc., and all the army then came to Southampton, and there took winter quarters." With the enemy so near to Romsey as Southampton, it is hardly likely that the convent would have escaped pillage at least and probably destruction. It is possible to conjecture that the nuns may have fled for protection to Winchester.

The absence of any chronicle of Romsey makes it impossible to follow the fortunes of the house in any

BOROUGH OF LAMBETH
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ROMSEY ABBEY

detail. In 1085 the *Saxon Chronicle* notes that Christina, the sister of Edgar Atheling took the veil among the nuns here. In process of time her niece — the daughter of her sister Margaret — St Margaret of Scotland, who had married Malcolm III, is said to have confided to the care of the nuns of Romsey her daughter Matilda, afterwards known as Queen Maud the Good of England. In the twelfth century Mary, the only living daughter of King Stephen, became a nun in this abbey and in process of time abbess. She subsequently caused great scandal throughout England by leaving her convent and secretly marrying Matthew, Earl of Boulogne and Mortaigne. As she was under the vow of chastity by the laws of the church, her marriage was null and void, and she was compelled to return to her convent. The two daughters of the union were subsequently legitimated by Parliament in 1189.

The Great Pestilence of 1349 wrought great havoc in the community of Romsey. At the election of Jean Jacke as abbess in 1333 ninety nuns were present and recorded their votes. Sixteen years later she died, in 1349, and a successor was elected in the person of Joan Gervays who received the royal assent on May 7. We have no detailed account of the death-roll in the convent, but we may judge how terrible must have been the losses by the fact that the number of the nuns are found to have been reduced to eighteen in 1478 and they never rose above twenty-five until their final suppression. In fact, if it had not been that the nuns

of the Winchester diocese found in Bishop Edyndon, during the terrible scourge of the fourteenth century and after, a special patron, it is more than probable that Romsey as well as many other convents would have been unable to recover the disaster. In a document addressed to the bishop when the danger was passed they say that "he counted it a pious and pleasing thing mercifully to come to their assistance when overwhelmed by poverty, and in days when evil-doing was on the increase and the world was growing worse, and they were compelled by necessity to beg in secret. It was at such a time that the same father with the eye of compassion, seeing that from the beginning the monastery was slenderly provided for with land and possessions and that now we and our house, by the barrenness of our land, by the destruction of our woods, and by the diminution or taking away from the monastery of due and appointed rents, because of the dearth of tenants carried off by the unheard-of and unwonted pestilence" come to our assistance to avert our entire undoing.

The church as it now stands measures 240 feet in length, the presbytery 52 feet and the transept 121 feet; the low central tower is about 100 feet high. The whole structure is mainly Norman, although the western bays of the nave are Early English and the eastern bays as high as the clerestory. The choir extends into the central crossing, and the transepts have eastern apsidal chapels. The domestic buildings have

ROMSEY ABBEY: THE NUN'S DOORWAY

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entirely disappeared, and perhaps the only relic of the whole is the interesting carved ancient crucifix, which stood outside the door leading from the cloister to the church at the place where the nuns used to assemble before their choir duties.

In 1523 the last abbess of Romsey was elected in the person of Elizabeth Ryprose and in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of Henry VIII the net value of the possessions are given as just over £393 a year. The convent did not, therefore, come under the provisions of the act suppressing the lesser religious houses in 1536. The ultimate fate of the place affords an example of the personal pressure that was exerted by the King's agents on the superiors of the greater abbeys to obtain their surrender into the King's hands. On the eve of its dissolution Romsey maintained a community of twenty-five nuns. They appear to have been unwilling to fall in with the King's views and by abandoning their religious life, to allow their property to pass into Henry's possession. The community shows great vitality and about a third of its members had made their religious profession after July 28, 1534. One of these was Catherine, youngest daughter of Sir Nicholas Wadham, at that time Governor of the Isle of Wight, whose elder sister Jane had been for some years a professed nun in the abbey. At this time the convent steward was a certain John Foster, who had a house at Raddesley near Romsey. His position would have given him accurate infor-

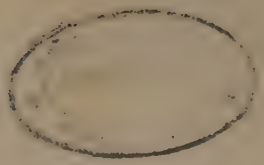
mation as to the extent and value of the Romsey property, and his necessary intercourse would have afforded him the means of bringing influence to bear upon the nuns. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that Foster was selected by the royal agent for this service and that he sounded the nuns as to their dispositions to do Henry's will and let him have their property.

In the report John Foster sent to Sir William Seymour, he says: "According to your request I herein signify and subscribe unto you the state of the house of Romsey — First you shall understand that the house is out of debt; also the plate and jewels are worth £300 and more; Six bells are worth £100 at least; also the church is a great sumptuous thing all free stone and covered with lead, which, as I esteem it, is worth £300 or £400 or rather better." Foster then goes on to give particulars of the rents coming to the house from the lands, on some at least of which Seymour had set his heart. He then concludes: "And where you wrote, that I should ascertain you whether I thought that the abbess with the rest of the nuns would be content to surrender up their house: the truth is I do perceive throughout the motion that your kinswomen and other of your friends made for you, that they would be content at all times to do you any pleasure they may. But I perceive they would be loath to trust to the Commissioners' gentlemen, for they hear say that other houses have been straightly handled."

The kinswomen of Seymour in the convent by whom

Foster hoped to accomplish the voluntary surrender were Catherine Wadham, subprioress, her sister, and Elizabeth Hill. Apparently, however, his design was unsuccessful, for no surrender deed of the abbey is extant, neither are the names of either the abbess or her nuns found on the pension lists.

The year 1539 saw the end of the corporate existence of the convent of Romsey. The destruction of the domestic buildings at once commenced, and if today the "great sumptuous church," as John Foster called it, is still standing, we owe it not to any regard for it on the part of the authorities, but to a purchase made on February 20, 1545, by the inhabitants of the town. The deed shows that they paid £100 for the pile, and as this sum is much below the estimate of John Foster, it is possible that in the five intervening years the place may have been much despoiled and defaced.



CHAPTER XX

Sherborne

SHERBORNE ABBEY in Dorset was anciently the seat of a bishop. According to our historians, about the year 705 the west Saxon See of Dorchester was divided, and whilst Bishop Daniel kept his chair at Winchester, St Aldhelm became first bishop of the See of Sherborne, which comprised the counties of Wilts, Dorset, Berks, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. Sherborne itself is described by William of Malmesbury as having been a very insignificant town, and he expresses his astonishment at its having remained for so long a time a Cathedral city. The erection of other Sees round about in the tenth century, and the division of the diocese territorially finally left Sherborne with only the county of Dorset as its share of what had been a most extensive diocese. As an episcopal seat it came to an end in 1078 when, having been united in 1058 with Ramsbury by Bishop Herman, it was finally merged into the new diocese of Salisbury.

The first bishop of Sherborne, St Aldhelm, was an interesting personality. It is claimed for him that he was the first Englishman who wrote in Latin, and he speaks of himself as having been the first to introduce poetry into the country. William of Malmesbury in

relating his life describes the people of this part of the country in Aldhelm's time as half barbarians. It was difficult to instruct them as they were little disposed to come to church or to listen to discourses on religion. In order, therefore, to attract them, the bishop, who was a musician of no mean parts, used to place himself on a bridge with an instrument and sing to the passers-by ballads of his own composition. Mixing grave things with those of a lighter vein, the Saint gradually won the attention and then the hearts of the people to religious matters.

The actual date of the establishment of the monks at Sherborne is doubtful. In the tenth century, as in so many other ancient monastic establishments, secular canons certainly had possession of the place. In 998, however, Bishop Wulsin substituted Benedictine monks for the priests who were then serving the church. The charter of King Ethelred giving full permission for the change is extant, and from that time its connexion with the Benedictine Order is clear. At first, of course, whilst bishops still ruled the See of Sherborne, the head of the monastery would have been, as in the case of other monastic cathedrals, a prior. The bishop was held to have the position of abbot, and in many cases had more or less practical jurisdiction over the cloister as well as the appointment of many of the officials. When in 1075 the See of Sherborne became merged in that of Old Sarum or Salisbury, the office of prior was apparently continued, till some time about the year 1122, when

bishop Roger of Salisbury, having united the Priory of Horton to Sherborne, erected the latter into an abbey and blessed the Prior Thurstan as its first abbot.

It is interesting to note that St Stephen Harding, the second founder of Citeaux and the one who really drew up the Cistercian rule, was a monk from Sherborne. He received his education in the monastery, and three of the monks who joined him at Citeaux are said to have also come from the abbey.

The rectory of Sherborne, which in the "taxation of Pope Nicholas," was valued at sixty marks, was a prebend of Salisbury and a peculiar of that See. The abbot held a singular position in virtue of his office as head of the Church at Sherborne; he was a prebendary of Salisbury and had his stall in the cathedral. This prebend was held by each successive abbot until the dissolution in the sixteenth century, when being considered as part of the office of abbot then suppressed, it became extinct.

With the erection of the monastery into an abbey, the work of rebuilding and reconstruction began. When it was over, all that was left of the older structure was the western doorway in the north aisle and a part of the adjoining wall-work. Bishop Roger of Salisbury manifested his continued interest in the abbey by building the piers of the tower and a chapel in the north transept. The south porch was also the work of his time, and then also the choir was arranged under the tower. In the thirteeth century the Lady chapel

SHERBORNE ABBEY FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

was rebuilt, and in the following century four windows were placed in the north aisle, but these must soon have been blocked up by the building of the cloisters. These cloisters were probably not unlike those of Gloucester; they had six windows or bays in each walk, and the vaulting was in the style known as "fan-traceried."

At the western end of the church stood the parish church of All Hallows, built upon the site of a great western porch twenty-nine feet broad, which originally had opened into the nave by a double row of pillars and small arches. This parish church had been removed out of the nave of the abbey church, and the abbot built a smaller doorway in the Norman arch, which greatly irritated the people already apparently opposed to their removal from the church. Leland in his *Itinerary* has left us a quaint account of what happened as the result of the existing popular ill-feeling. "The body of the abbey church," he says, "dedicated to Our Lady, served until a hundred years since for the chief parish church of the town. This was the cause of the abolition of the parish church there: the monks and the townsmen fell at variance because the townsmen took privilege to use the sacrament of Baptism in the chapel of All Hallows. Upon this Walter Gallow, a stout butcher living in Sherborne, defaced clean the font stone; and after, the variance growing to a plain sedition, the townsmen by the help of the Earl of Huntingdon—and the bishop of Salisbury

on the monks' part—a priest of All Hallows shot a shaft with fire into the top of that part of St Mary's church that divided the east part that the monks used from what the townsmen used. This portion chancing at that time to be thatched, the roof was set on fire, and consequently the whole church, and the lead and bells melted." The Lady chapel and the porch alone escaped, and what is called "the red stain of fire" may still be seen on the walls of the church.

This was in 1436, and the abbot of the day—Abbot Bradford—set to work at once to repair the disaster. He forced the townsfolk to contribute towards the rebuilding of the presbytery, on the bosses of which he carved a fiery arrow as a warning against further feuds. The new vaulting was constructed in the peculiar fan-tracery pattern of the cloister. In 1459 the Norman triforium and clerestory of five bays of the nave were pulled down, the south aisle was refaced with the old materials, and the new windows inserted. Towards the close of the century the aisles were vaulted, and this was apparently the last great work done by the monks.

Of the domestic buildings some small portions alone remain. On the west side the cellarer's lodging or guest hall with a fine fifteenth-century roof, over a thirteenth-century undercroft, still exists, and to the north of these there are remains of the abbot's quarters; his parlour and guest hall for example. Near the site of the refectory is the convent kitchen containing a fire-

SHERBORNE ABBEY: CHOIR AND EAST WINDOW

place carved with the symbols of the Evangelists. The cloisters are entirely gone and the hexagonal vaulted conduit of 1510, which used to be in the centre of the cloister garth, now stands in a position in the town. Leland calls it "a fair castle over the conduit in the cloister and the spouts to it," and says it was made by John Meer or Myer, the last abbot but one, who resigned in 1535.

The last abbot, John Barnstable, was elected on May 31, 1535, and he surrendered the monastery on March 18, 1539. The deed was acknowledged by his signature and those of sixteen monks, who all got pensions. The historian of Dorset says that on January 4, 1539, the King demised the property to Sir John Horsey, Kt. The deed in which this grant is conveyed names the Great Court, the Abbot's Garden, West Garden, Pyggy's Barton, Prior's Garden, etc., all commonly called "the demesne lands of the monastery," which were situated in Sherborne, and were in the occupation of the abbot for the use of the house, for keeping up hospitality, etc. It would appear that Sir John Horsey in anticipation of the surrender on May 1, 1539, paid £1,242 3s. 9d. to the King for these grants and at the same time £16 10s. 6d. for "the site of the church, steeple, campanile and churchyard of the monastery," and other property.

A note printed by Dugdale from the parish *Register* of Sherborne carries the history of the sale of the ruins a step further and explains how the beautiful church was saved from destruction. The note runs: " The feast

of the Annunciation of our Lady being the *Shere* Thursday in *Cæna Domini*, the year of our Lord 1540, and the thirty-first of our Sovereign Lord King Henry VIII, the monks being expelled and the house suppressed by the King's authority, Master John Horsey, Kt. Councillor to the King's Grace, bought the said suppressed house to himself and to his heirs in fee for ever, and then the said Master Horsey, Knight, sold the said church and the ground to the Vicar and parish of Sherborne for 100 marks, to them and their successors for ever, and the said Vicar and parish took possession on the same day and year above said.—Per me. D. Johannem Chattmyll, Vicar." This is probably the correct account: another story says that the parishioners paid £230 for their church to Sir John Horsey, and in order to raise the money sold their old parish church of All Hallows for the materials. It is probable, however, that this sum refers to the sale of the roofing of the minster, with that of the bell tower and dormitory, the lead of which was purchased for that sum. It was no doubt owing to the prompt action of the townsfolk that this fine minster church with its unrivalled fan-groining—a great example of what was done in England for architecture even during the Wars of the Roses—was preserved to us. Thomas Arundell, the King's receiver for the county of Dorset acknowledges having got from Sherborne by way of sales, etc., during the first year after its suppression the respectable sum of £520 6s. 8¾d.

BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM
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CHAPTER XXI

Titchfield

AN ABBEY dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist was founded in the year 1231 or 1232 at Titchfield in Hampshire by Peter de Rupibus, bishop of Winchester. This prelate had already established Hales Owen, another house of the same Order in Shropshire, and he brought thence a colony of religious and gave them his manor of Titchfield for the purpose of a second foundation. The abbey was placed on the banks of the river Titchfield in the hollow of a valley which reaches down to the tidal mouth of the stream which there finds its way to the sea outside the Southampton water.

The religious were of the Order of Prémontré, which had been founded in the early part of the twelfth century by St Norbert. On Christmas Day, 1121, the white habit of the canons regular was given to Norbert and some forty companions at a place called Prémontré, in the diocese of Laon, and for many centuries this monastery remained the mother house of the Order, which was called after it the Premonstratensian Order. The first monastery of white canons in these islands was founded in Scotland during the lifetime of St Norbert. In England, the first colony was established in 1143 at

Newhouse, in Lincolnshire, the community being furnished from the abbey of Lisques, near Calais. Within 100 years the spread of the new Order in this country had been phenomenal, and Newhouse itself had established eleven abbeys in various parts of England. Titchfield, which was commenced in 1231, less than a century after the new Order had first taken root in the country, was practically the last of the English foundations, which numbered in all thirty-five.

Bishop Peter de Rupibus in establishing the abbey reserved to himself and his successors in the See of Winchester the patronage of the abbey, which remained to them in right of the bishopric until the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century. It was upon August 15, 1231, that Richard, the first abbot, and his fellow canons reached Titchfield to take possession of their new foundation, and in memory of the day the house was dedicated to Our Blessed Lady of the Assumption.

From 1232, the date of its foundation, to 1537, that of its suppression, the monastery was ruled by a line of twenty abbots. Of the earlier history very little indeed is known. From one indication it would appear that the Great Pestilence of 1349 visited the abbey somewhat severely. The abbot, Peter de Wynton, was blessed only on June 8, 1348, and died on August 14, 1349. Possibly also the predecessor of this abbot, John de Combe, who died on May 23, 1348, when the plague was rife in the diocese, may have been also a victim

TITCHFIELD ABBEY

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of this great scourge which carried off half of the population of England.

In 1529 John Max, who had been Abbot of Welbeck from 1500 and who had been consecrated bishop of Elphin in 1525, was elected abbot of Titchfield. From that time till 1535, when he died, he held both it and Welbeck *in commendam*. The last abbot was named John Sampson or Sympson, and he ruled only till 1537, when the monastery was suppressed. This same abbot was also a bishop, as he is called John Salysbury, suffragan bishop of Thetford.

The records of one or two visitations and several lists of the canons in the last decades of the fifteenth century afford some slight details about this house. In 1478, the visitor appointed by the General of the Order was Bishop Redman, who was also abbot of Shapp. He came to Titchfield on July 2, and found William Austen, the abbot, and a community of thirteen canons living there at that time. He reported that the discipline was excellent and that he had seen nothing serious to correct or to report to the General Chapter. To attain to greater perfection he suggests the necessity of a better keeping of silence in the refectory and the utility of certain minor changes in ceremonial. He notes that at the time of the last Visit the house was £40 in debt; that this now has been paid off, and a good provision was in hand in the way of stores, etc.

The same visitor arrived on his next official tour on September 9, 1482. The number of the community

was the same, although many names in the previous list had disappeared in the intervening four years, their places being filled by others. Special commendation is passed on the abbot's administration, which is declared to be excellent. Necessary repairs had been made to the old buildings and new ones had been successfully undertaken. Incidentally we hear of a lake that was situated within the enclosure; because in the case of one, Ralph Axminster, which was brought up for Bishop Redman's consideration, it is said that he had left the dormitory at night to catch fish in it. Financially, the abbey remained in the same excellent state as before.

Six years pass before the next visitation, which took place on July 23, 1488. At that time the former abbot, William Austen, had been dead two years, and Thomas Oke or Roke was reigning in his stead. According to his account he had found on coming to office that the place was in debt £100, but during his two years of office he had managed to pay off half of this sum. For this and for other evidence of good administration in spirituals and temporals he was praised by the visitor. Three years later, on June 1, 1491, the visitor was again at Titchfield. There had been rumours set about of various quarrels amongst the community, and dissensions and contentions with the superior were spoken of. On diligently inquiring into the matter, Bishop Redman confessed himself unable to find anything very serious, and contented himself with a general exhortation to greater fraternal charity and with forbid-

ding all to speak about the matters at issue after his departure. Since the previous visitation the debts of the house had been diminished by £20.

The records of three subsequent visitations exist: namely those of 1494, 1497 and 1500. They do not materially add to our knowledge of the abbey; in the first it is interesting to hear that entire peace reigned in the place, and that, although the house was still in debt, Bishop Redman thought he could now insist upon the building of a proper infirmary for the sick and old. In the second he again testifies to the excellent condition in which he finds the discipline of the establishment; and in the third, made September 22, 1500, he prohibits certain changes in the habit, which were creeping in, and orders greater care in the keeping of silence. He ends by praising the abbot's administration, by which Titchfield is once more entirely freed from the burden of debt. The abbot, Thomas Oke, lived for eight years longer, and when he died, in 1509, he was succeeded by Thomas Blankepayne, who appears as a novice in the list of 1482, and had consequently been six-and-twenty years in religion. He died in 1529.

The inventory of goods made on the election of Richard Aubray as abbot of Titchfield, in 1420, affords us a glimpse at the treasures of the sacristy. "We found," say the commissioners, "in charge of the sacrist a silver gilt cup, to place the Body of Christ in, two large gilt chalices and twelve other chalices, of

which six were gilt, one great gospel book with divers relics, a silver gilt vase with feet and full of relics, a great silver gilt cross with the images of Mary and John and with large and full-sized feet, a processional staff with a great ball of silver to set the great cross in, a small silver gilt cross ornamented with stones; with a small ball of silver, a silver gilt *textum* with a great beryl and a list of the dead fixed in it, two cruets of silver gilt, a silver gilt vase for incense with a silver spoon, two candlesticks of silver gilt, two silver dishes, a silver gilt pastoral staff, a box containing divers jewels, a box for a chalice, spoons and other broken silver, with the ancient foot of a small cross, a pix in which to place the Body of Christ.

"Also in the treasury of the church was found three silver gilt cups with feet, two with covers, three pieces of gilt plate with covers and one with feet, one piece with the cover gilt on the inside, two gilt spoons, a salt gilt and with a cover, four other silver salts, two with covers, one large piece of silver plate with a cover, two other pieces of silver plate with feet and covers, a silver pear-shaped piece for powder, four silver bowls with feet and covers, two silver plates, two silver dishes, three silver basins, two silver ewers, a silver plate with feet for spices, five cups with feet and covers, a piece of plate with a low foot, thirty-eight pieces of silver, one with a cover, twenty-four silver spoons."

I have given a translation of this interesting inventory in full, as an example of the riches and works of

art which must have been gathered together in the various religious houses of the kingdom. Of these, practically no trace now exists. Titchfield was, of course, after all only one of the smaller abbeys when compared with many of the others, and to have a knowledge of the existence of treasures such as these in its keeping in the fifteenth century sets the imagination at work to picture what must have existed elsewhere.

For Titchfield we have, perhaps, a more complete account of the appearance of a monastic library in the fifteenth century than for any other place. "There are in the library of Titchfield," says the preface of the old catalogue, "four cases to put books in. Thus on the east face [i.e, opposite the door] there are two: viz. [case] one and [case] two. On the south side is case three and on the north, case four."

Each of these cases had eight shelves, marked with a letter of the alphabet, which represented a division of the library. Thus roughly in case one were placed the Bibles and the patristic glosses on Holy Scripture; in case two was what might be termed the theological portion of the library; in case three the sermons, legends, regulæ, with canon and civil law; whilst case four contained books upon medical and surgical science, upon grammar, logic and philosophy as well as a division of unclassed volumes. The letters of the alphabet afforded further divisions: thus, B was fixed to seven shelves of case one, and contained the various glosses on the Bible; and D, affixed to five shelves of case two, was

assigned to the works of St Gregory and St Augustine. Lastly, on the first folio of each volume was entered the shelf letter, followed by a number naming its position on the shelf. Thus, to take an example, the volume from which these particulars are taken is called the *Rememoratorum de Tychefelde*. It has on its first page the press mark "P.X." Turning to the catalogue we find that the volume is entered as the tenth book of shelf P.

The same number of canons at Titchfield appears to have been maintained all during the fifteenth century, and indeed until the suppression in 1539. The abbey escaped the fate of the smaller houses in 1536, as its revenue was above £200 a year, namely £249 16s. 1d. The site was granted by Henry VIII to Sir Thomas Wriothesley, who commenced at once, according to Leland, to build "a right stately house"; chiefly, adds Dugdale, "out of the materials of the abbey."

A report "concerning the monastery of Titchfield" was written to Sir Thomas Wriothesley immediately after he had got possession of it. It runs thus: "The church is the most naked and barren thing that ever we knew, being of such antiquity and long continuance. The vestments which you gave and two old chalices excepted, forty will be the rest. At Michaelmas last there were two team of oxen and now not one ox, but a few young calves and lambs, hogs of small value; certain brewing vessels, a dozen rusty platters, dishes and saucers ... As for the hangings left we esteem

them at 20s. . . The debts amount to £200. The abbot and convent look by promises to be assured during their life yearly £120; as you do know the abbot must have a hundred marks, every priest £6 13s. 4d., being eight in number and three novices £5. You know also that the house oweth the King for the first fruits above 200 marks and surely so far as we can judge the transposition and alteration of the house, which of necessity must be done, will stand you in 300 marks at the least."

CHAPTER XXII

Tintern

THE Cistercian abbey of Tintern is regarded as typical of all that is beautiful and picturesque in the ruined abbeys of England. Situated on a strip of level ground on the banks of the romantic river Wye, and backed by a semicircle of heavily wooded hills, the abbey church still remains almost entire as regards its main architectural features. For the unrivalled beauty of its situation and for its completeness even in its ruined state Tintern is thought by many to stand first among similar memorials of the wanton destruction wrought in the sixteenth century.

Our Lady of Tintern was founded in 1131 for the Cistercian Order by Walter de Clare, the grandson of Walter Fitzosbert, Earl of Ew, to whom the Conqueror had granted the land in this part which he could obtain by his victories over the Welsh. Walter de Clare's son, Gilbert Stronbow, became the first Earl of Pembroke, and when he came to die in 1148, as a generous benefactor he was buried in the church at Tintern. His son, again, was Richard de Clare or Stronbow, known to history as the conqueror of Ireland in the reign of Henry II. It has been thought by some that he, too, was buried in the abbey his family had

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TINTERN ABBEY AND THE WYE

founded, and that a cross-legged effigy of a knight in chain armour still to be seen in the ruins is his monument.

The monks to colonise Tintern came from the abbey of Aumone, in the diocese of Chartres. This monastery had itself been begun only ten years before, but had increased sufficiently to find an abbot and twelve monks for the new venture in England—an instance of the rapid growth of the Cistercian movement in the first half-century of its existence. Indeed, the multiplication of these houses proceeded at such a rate that it became necessary to put a stop to it in the the General Chapter of the Order.

The style of the church is Transitional from Early English to Decorated; it was begun in the first foundation of the abbey by Walter de Clare, and was only finished in 1287, 156 years later. It was almost entirely rebuilt in the thirteenth century by Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk. Though roofless, this beautiful specimen of architecture remains almost perfect. One or two pillars have fallen, and the northern arcade of a nave of six bays is broken, but the walls are perfect, and the stone appears little injured by exposure to the weather. The church measures 245 feet in length; the transepts 110 feet; and the four pointed gables form a feature in the church. The east end has a great two-light window 64 feet high. "This window, with its one tall mullion ramifying at the top and leaving the large open spaces beneath to admit the distant land-

scape, is one chief feature of Tintern" (Gilpin). The west window opposite has seven lights, and it needs little imagination to picture what a glorious sight it must have been when filled with painted glass.

The central arch at the crossing was 70 feet high, and the choir extended one bay into the nave. The cloisters were 111 feet on two sides, and 99 feet on the other two, and the offices were arranged in the usual manner of Cistercian houses; owing to the position of the ground, the domestic buildings were on the north side of the church. Of these very little indeed remains of interest; they have been gradually utilized in the building of cottages, roads and pigstyes in the neighbourhood.

From the accounts of the abbey given by the abbot, Richard Wych, for the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in 1535, it appears that the abbey had a gross income of £356 11s. 6d. This was greatly reduced by necessary payments, fees and pensions, etc. According to the charter of foundation the porter, laundress, church-clerk and ferrymen had large carrodies or annual payments, which, however, were disallowed by Henry VIII; gifts to the poor were made on Maundy Thursday, on Christmas Day and the Feast of the Purification, Palm Sunday, the Assumption and All Saints' Day for the soul of Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk and his ancestors, and again on the Feast of St Nicholas for his anniversary. In some accounts we find that a sum of £2 each was allowed yearly for the clothing of the

TINTERN ABBEY FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

monks; that there were six servants of the abbot; three men fishing in the Severn for the monastery; four kitchen servants, a tailor, a barber, a stableman and a cutter of wood. Besides these curious particulars the accounts reveal the fact that the royal officials, whose purpose it was to get as much for the tenth as possible, refused to allow the deductions claimed by the abbot. From the total receipt of £256 11s. 6½d. Abbot Wych claimed a deduction making the taxable amount to be only £192 1s. 4d. The King claimed that the whole had been understated, and Tintern was charged on a revenuetof £258 5s. 10d.

Wha ever may have been the opinion of the Crown officials in view of taxation, after the passing of the Act of Par liament in 1536 dissolving the smaller monasteries which had an income of less than £200 a year, Tintern was apparently adjudged to fall within that limit. For some reason, which does not appear, the abbot was sent for by Crumwell up to London, as we know from his reply, saying, "I have received your letters this Saturday morning by the servant of John Winter, of Bristol, directing me to come at once to you. . . . Had I had them on Friday I should have started at once, but now will wait till Monday, over the High Feast of Our Blessed Lady," probably March 25, 1537. Whatever may have been the business, it was probably connected with the then important matter of the forced suppression of the house. It was taken possession of by Henry, Earl of Worcester, in the name of the King,

on September 1, 1537, and shortly afterwards that nobleman had a grant from the Crown of the property.

Few details about the actual suppression and work of "defacing" the "superfluous buildings," as the wanton destruction was called, have come down to us. As the history of these dissolutions was much the same in every case it may be of interest to give the account of what took place in regard to another Cistercian house in the words of one who was a boy at the time and who heard it from one actually present. "In the plucking down of these houses," he writes, "for the most part this order was taken: that the visitors should come suddenly upon every house unawares. . . . . For as soon as the visitors were entered within the gates, they called the abbot and other officers of the house and caused them to deliver all the keys and took an inventory of all their goods, both within doors and without. For of all such beasts, horses, sheep, and such cattle as were abroad in pasture or grange-places, the visitors caused to be brought into their presence. And when they had done so [they] turned the abbot and all his convent and household forth of doors.

"This thing was not a little grief to the convent and all the servants of the house, departing one from another and especially such as with their conscience could not break their profession. It would have made a heart of flint melt and weep to have seen the breaking up of the house, the sorrowful departing [of the brethren], and the sudden spoil that fell the same day as their

departing from their home. And everyone had everything good, cheap, except the poor monks, friars and nuns, who had no money to bestow on anything. This appeared at the suppression of an abbey, hard by me, called Roche Abbey. . . . At the breaking up of this an uncle of mine was present, being well acquainted with several of the monks there. And when they were put out of the house, one of the monks, his friend, told him that everyone of the convent had given to him his cell in which he lived, wherein was not anything of price, but his bed and apparel, which was but simple and of small price. This monk wished my uncle to buy something of him, who said: 'I see nothing that is worth money for my use.' 'No,' said he, 'Give me two shillings for my cell door, which was never made with five shillings.' . . . Such persons as afterwards brought them corn or hay or suchlike, finding all the doors either open or the locks and 'shackles' plucked down or the door itself taken away, went in and took what they found and filched it away.

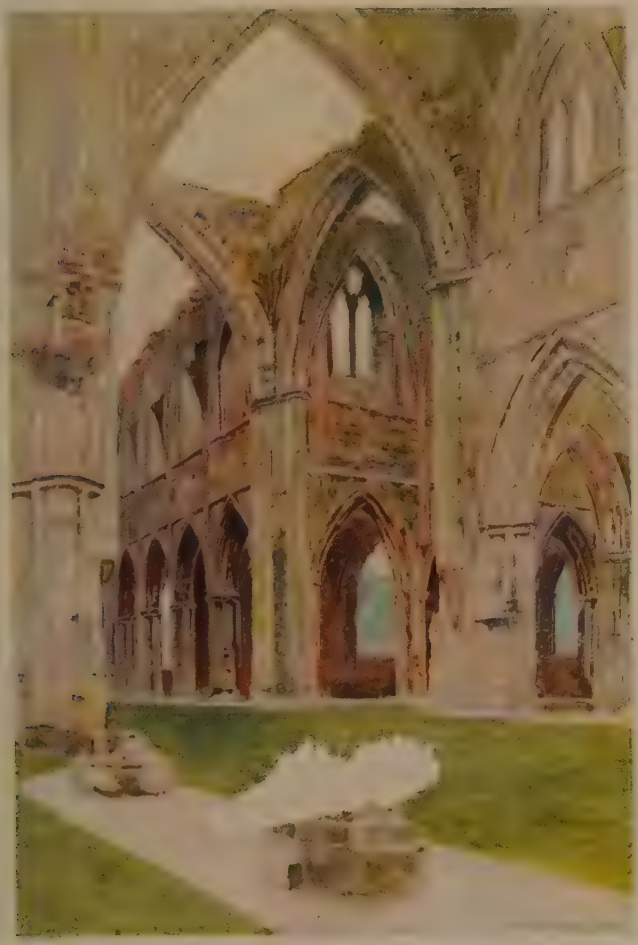
"Some took the service books that lay in the church and put them upon their wain 'coppes' to piece them; some took windows of the hayloft and hid them in their hay, and likewise they did of many other things. Some pulled forth the iron hooks out of the walls that had brought none, when the yeomen or gentlemen of the county had brought the timber of the church.

"The church was the first thing that was put to spoil and then the abbot's lodging, the dorter and frater

with the cloister and all the buildings thereabout within the abbey walls. Nothing was spared but the ox-houses and swine-cots and such other houses of office that stood without the walls, which had more favour shown them than the very church itself, which was done by the advice of Crumwell, as Fox reporteth it in his book of Acts.

"It would have pitied any heart to see what tearing up of the lead there was, what plucking up of boards and throwing down of sherds. And when the lead was torn off and cast down into the church and the tombs in the church all broken (for in most abbeys were divers noble men and women—yea, in some abbeys Kings whose tombs were regarded no more than the tombs of inferior persons) for to what end should they stand when the church over them was not spared for their sakes? All things of price either spoiled, carried away, or defaced to the uttermost.

"The persons who cast the lead into fodders plucked up all the seats in the choir, wherein the monks sat when they said service, which were like to the seats in minsters and burned them and melted the lead therewith, although there was wood plenty within a flight shot of them. . . . In the rocks were found pewter vessels that were conveyed away and there hidden, so that it seemeth that every person bent himself to filch and spoil what he could. Yea, even such persons were content to spoil them, that seemed not two days before to allow their religion and do great worship and reve-



TINTERN ABBEY: INTERIOR

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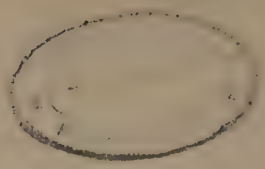
rence at their Matins, Masses and other services and all other of their doings. This is a strange thing to consider that they who could this day think it to be the house of God, the next [did hold it as] the house of the devil; or else they would not have been so ready to have spoiled it."

There is very little doubt that in its main features the account of the spoliation of Roche Abbey is the same as that of Tintern. The fact that the latter was situated in an isolated place may possibly have saved it from wanton destruction and may account for the state of comparative preservation in which we find the church to-day. The accounts of the Augmentation Office, which was established to deal with the confiscated property and the expected spoils which would fall to the Crown, gives the very inadequate sum of £132 8s. 7d. as the total received from the plunder of Tintern.



CHAPTER XXIII

Torre Abbey

THE situation of Torre Abbey in the olden days must have been ideal. Placed on the sea coast of Devon, it looked southward across Torre Bay towards Brixham, and it is said to have been the best provided of all the five-and-thirty houses of the English Premonstratensian canons. It was founded in 1196 by William Brinier, was endowed with much property in the neighbourhood, and was given the patronage of several churches and chapels. The abbey of Welbeck became the mother house of Torre, sending one of their number, Adam, with six companions to start it; but after three years and a half Adam was translated to Newhouse as abbot. The list of the superiors at Torre is far from complete, and little is known of the history of this important abbey beyond what may be gathered from the lately published records of the Order in England.

One curious story connected with the house in the fourteenth century has been preserved in the *Register* of Bishop Brantyngham of Exeter. In 1390 the bishop solemnly excommunicated the unknown person or persons who had spread abroad a story that the abbot of Torre, William Norton, had murdered and beheaded

one of his canons, Simon Hastings. This accusation the bishop pronounced to be an infamous and malicious falsehood, all the more clearly so as the canon in question was actually alive and had been seen by many both at his abbey and elsewhere.

In the year 1456 the abbot of St Radegund's was the representative in England of the abbot of Prémontré. As such he possessed all powers of visitation over the houses of the Order, and was answerable to the Chapter of Premonstratensians for the good discipline of the English branch. Acting in that capacity, on September 10, 1456, he wrote to the abbot of Torre, Richard Cade, then recently appointed, about certain rumours he had heard concerning the prior, William Answell. His influence in the house was a bad one, according to reports, as he was a sower of discord and contention, and the visitor directs that the prior be forthwith sent to him at St Radegund's that the matter be inquired into. In the same letter the writer says that he understands that the monastic property has been squandered, that the abbot does not take advice, has taken too great burdens on the house and has not tried to put a stop to the hurtful dissensions which take place in his monastery. He further suggests to him the propriety of resigning his office as abbot.

In 1478 we have the first of the regular series of visitations which afford an insight into the inner history of Torre for the last quarter of the fifteenth century. In that year Bishop Redman, who was also abbot

of Shappand visitor of the Order in England, appointed by the abbot general of Prémontré, came to Torre, on August 1, on his first visitation. One canon confessed before him the crime of "apostacy," theft and rebellion, which having been put into plain language meant leaving his enclosure without permission, disobeying his superior and spending money without leave. He was sent to do penance at the monastery of Newhouse for forty days on bread and water, followed by three years' imprisonment, and a further detention there for another term of ten years. Another canon accused of apostasy in the same sense was ordered to Welbeck to undergo similar punishment. Bishop Redman enjoined the abbot to try and increase the number of the religious at Torre by every means in his power, and he gave certain regulations for the community life. The brethren were not to drink after Compline without urgent need, and never without full permission. The time of Vespers was to be at 4 o'clock, both summer and winter, and all were to be in bed by 8 p.m. He praises the general administration of the abbot, however, and does not find anything of grave importance to correct or to refer to the General Chapter.

In his next visitation on September 21, 1482, Bishop Redman is able to praise the administration of Abbot Cade in high terms. "In obtaining what is for the good of the monastery," he says, "the abbot is provident and circumspect beyond any other abbot of the Order." At this time one of the canons was accused

TORRE ABBEY

of breaking open the abbot's treasury, but on inquiry he was able to clear himself. The visitor finds that silence might be kept better, and that the tonsure was getting too big, but there are no grave matters to be corrected or reported to the Chapter. Incidentally, we see from the document that the abbot was getting somewhat old and infirm—he was dead before the next visit—and the bishop charges the community to try and assist him when his troubles and sickness should increase upon him and he should become less able to see to all things himself.

It is six years before there is any record of another visit to the abbey. This time, for some reason—"out of sollicitude for the monastery" the document says—the bishop did not actually come to Torre itself. He remained at their house of Durford in Sussex, and thither the abbot and a proctor for the community went to meet him. In this visit he gives the best report to his investigations. Everything is in an excellent state through the administration of the abbot, now Thomas Dare or Dyer, and the community have a filial affection for him and obey him in all confidence.

At the time of the abbot's appointment the house was in debt by fifty marks, now that sum has been paid and a hundred marks are due to them. In the same way the stock and grain has increased by "his circumspect provision."

Three years later, on May 24, 1491, Bishop Redman comes again to Torre to discharge his duty as visitor.

This time a grave charge of incontinence is brought against one of the community, but after full and patient inquiry the visitor finds him innocent, but imprudent. He urges on all the need of being on their guard to avoid giving any occasion for suspicion by their conduct. He reminds them of the rule of the Order that no one is to eat or drink in any house within a league of their monastery, and he forbids all games played for money, especially the game of tennis. The canons evidently took the admonition of the visitor to heart and as a community pulled themselves together, for three years later, on June 12, 1494, the bishop was able to declare, after examination, that he had found all things in good order and all laws faithfully observed by both superior and subjects. The community also at this time were in a flourishing state; there were no less than six novices on the list, all of whom persevered and appear in the list three years later as canons professed.

Bishop Redman made two other visitations of Torre, in 1497 and in 1500. He had now become bishop of Exeter, in which diocese Torre Abbey was situated. In order, therefore, to safeguard for the abbey its privilege of exemption from episcopal visitation, on each of these occasions he protests that he has come to visit the place not as bishop of Exeter, but as the commissary of the abbot of Prémontré, which office he still continues to hold. In 1497 he finds everything in a most satisfactory state. The place, he says, is governed in all

things to the honour of God and to the good of the monastery. "So much is this so, that nothing whatever there offended my sight, but everything appeared proper to a holy life." In the visitation of 1500 the Bishop renews his commendation of the rule of the abbot; he finds all things in an excellent state, but corrects two of the canons for carelessness in regard to silence. The community is seen to have increased its numbers in this last glimpse we get of it. Twenty years before it was fourteen, now it is eighteen, four of them are novices.

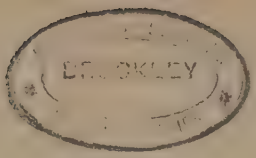
The last abbot was Simon Rede elected and confirmed by the King in August 1523. He and his fellow canons surrendered the monastery to the King, February 23, 1539, before the commissioner William Petre. The abbot and his religious each received a pension. One of the canons, John Estrige, died within a month of his being expelled from his old home.

The church was 200 feet long, but very little of it remains by which to judge of its architecture. There are now standing of the church only portions of the central tower, the east end of the choir, a south chapel: and of the domestic buildings, the entrance of the Chapter House, the refectory, a fourteenth-century building 52 feet by 25 feet; and a large gateway of the same date. Of the outbuildings a fine decorated barn 120 feet long still stands. Dr Oliver says of Torre that "nothing can exceed the beautiful situation of this great abbey; and if we may judge by the remains of the church, of the Chapter House and other buildings,

the magnificence of the fabric did honour to the situation." When Leland visited the abbey, three fair gateways were standing. One gateway remains.

The sale of the buildings and effects of the abbey began immediately here as elsewhere. In the accounts of the year ending Michaelmas 1340, Sir John Arundel credits the Augmentation Office with the amount of £43 10s. for the sale of bells and superfluous buildings at Torre. During the same time the same agent had expended £79 13s. 7d. in Devon and Cornwall in "defacing, breaking up and pulling down divers churches, bell towers, cloisters and other buildings of late monasteries." Sir John Arundel likewise acknowledges having received from various rents of Torre lands £180 7s. 1½d.

Two grants of the property are registered the year after the Dissolution. One on March 4, 1540, to Sir John Ridgeway, and the second on March 10 to Sir Roger Buett. The receipts from the rents paid in 1540 to Sir Thomas Arundel were £294 8s. 2¾d.



CHAPTER XXIV

Thorney

IN what is known as "the Isle of Cambridge" in the fen country, and about equally distant from Peterborough and Crowland, stood the Benedictine house of Thorney. It is said that Saxulph, the first abbot of Peterborough, built a hermitage on this spot about the year 662. It was then and for 200 years afterwards called Ancarig, and it is suggested, though the suggestion comes indeed from Ingulph's suspected chronicle, that the name was derived from the existence of several anchorites, who apparently lived there under the rule of a prior. Whatever may have been its early history Ancarig, like other monasteries, was destroyed by the Danes, and it was not until 972 that, being re-established by St Ethelwold of Winchester with the help and authority of King Edgar, Benedictine monks were placed there as at Peterborough and Crowland. The place then became known as Thorney —or the island of thorns—from the trees that grew luxuriantly upon it, an island by reason of the waters that surrounded it. It was considered a specially sacred island, and except to offer their devotions in the church, no women were allowed to set foot on the island, and the nearest place where they were permitted to stay was nine miles away.

St Ethelwold brought to Thorney, possibly on account of its secluded position, the body of St Botulph and many other relics of English Saints, which had been saved from destruction during the Danish wars. Amongst others he is said to have obtained the body of St Benet Bishop from the destroyed monastery of Weremouth. Edgar in his charter of foundations declares the monastery dedicated to Our Saviour and His Blessed Mother. He had chosen the spot, he says, because here two brothers, Tancred and Tortred, had lived the life of anchorites, the one being martyred, the other giving to the world a glorious confession of the Faith. Their sister Tova also had followed them in her manner of life and in the holiness of her death. Then devastation and entire destruction had almost obliterated the memory of what had been, until a pious woman, Ethelfled, bought the site and built upon it a monastery and church. This was now dedicated to the Holy Trinity: the eastern part of the presbytery was consecrated to "the honour of the Mother of God, Mary ever a virgin"; the western end "to St Peter, the guardian of the keys of heaven," and the north portico to St Benedict, patron of all monks.

The church set up by St Ethelwold, who apparently presided over Thorney whilst he lived, lasted for more than a century. At the time of the Conquest the abbatial office was held by Siward, a Dane, but about two years later, in 1068, the Conqueror appointed Fulcard, a Fleming. For some reason or other Fulcard was de-

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THORNEY ABBEY

posed in a council held at Gloucester by Archbishop Lanfranc in 1085. To the abbatial office thus vacant a monk of Battle Abbey named Gunther, was chosen. He set himself at once to the task of rebuilding much of the monastery: in the year of his election he took down the church, and much of the new structure was apparently finished in 1098. The whole was completed in 1108, four years before his death, although it was another twenty years before the dedication of the church was renewed.

The series of charters and other documents relating to Thorney show what numerous benefactors the monks had in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the Doomsday survey the value of the abbey is placed at about the same as that of Peterborough; and William of Malmesbury describes the place in the reign of Henry II, as wonderful and prosperous. "The monastery of Thorney," he writes, "is in the parish [i.e., diocese] of the Bishop of Ely. It is 'an image of Paradise': the eyes feast on the greenness of the trees, and herbs, and grass and everywhere presents the same delightful prospect. Not the smallest part of the soil remains uncultivated; here the land produces apple-trees, here the fields are devoted to the cultivation of vines, which either creep on the earth or rise towards heaven supported by poles. Nature and cultivation contend together, and where the one fails the other succeeds. . . . What shall be said of the beauty of the buildings which in a wonderful way amid these marshes have found firm

foundations! Absolute solitude secures quiet to the monks so that they may more closely cling to heavenly concerns."

The church, rebuilt in the sixteen years from 1098, was 290 feet long. The nave of five bays erected by Abbot Gunther still exists; it has a Perpendicular clerestory and a small triforium. The finest feature of the building at present is the west front; it has square turrets, with later octagonal terminations 100 feet high. High up over the west window there is a screen with elaborate panels, and niches with nine images. The five nave arches rest on pillars built between 1088 and 1125, and as the aisles and clerestory were destroyed at the suppression, the space between the piers is filled in with later work, and a row of clerestory windows substituted where the small triforium used to be. Willis states that about the year 1636 the side aisles were taken down and part of the material employed in filling in the arches of the nave.

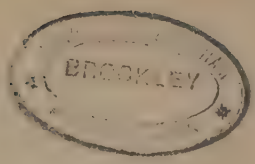
In the time of abbot William Ryall, who entered office in 1457, Reginald Pecock, bishop of Chichester, on being deprived of his See, was taken to Thorney to be kept in confinement. The Archbishop of Canterbury sent to the abbot the following instructions how he should be treated: "1. That he have a secret closed chamber with a chimney and a house of easement, and that he pass or go not out of the said chamber. 2. That he have but one person, that is serious and well disposed, to make his bed and fire as he shall have occasion, and that no one else speak to him without leave, and in the

presence of the abbot, unless the King or Archbishop send to the abbey any man with writing specially in that behalf. 3. That he shall have no books to look on or to read in, but only a Mass book, a psalter, a legend and a Bible. 4. That he have neither pen, ink nor paper. 5. That he have competent fuel or firing according to his age. 6. That the first quarter after his coming into the abbey he be contented to fare no better than a brother or monk doth, only of the freytour, or to have the same commons as the monks have in their common hall; but afterwards that he be served daily of meat and drink, as one of the friars or monks when he is excused from the freytour, and somewhat better afterwards, as his disposition, etc., shall require. For all which, and for fitting up this close apartment for the bishop, the abbot is ordered to have eleven pounds." For his maintenance £40 a year was assigned, but he is supposed to have lived only a year or two after his reclusion at Thorney, where he was doubtless buried.

Robert Blyth became abbot in 1525. At that time he was already bishop of Down and Connor in Ireland and held the abbey *in commendam*. He and his community of nineteen monks surrendered the monastery into the King's hands on December 1, 1539, and most of the community received the usual pension of £6 13s. 4d. a year. The abbot for his share obtained £200 a year and probably also the possession of the abbot's house at Whittlesey. In his will, dated October 19, 1547, he calls himself "Robert Blythe, bishop of Downe," and appoints

his body to be buried in the church of Whittlesey, in the county of Cambridge, before the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and gives a legacy to the parsonage of Whittlesey, belonging to the late dissolved monastery of Thorney.

The greater portion of the possessions of the abbey of Thorney, together with the site of the monastery, were granted, in the third year of King Edward VI, to John, Earl of Bedford. By that time, although we have not the actual details, we may be pretty sure that the main part of the monastic buildings, including the church, had been wrecked, as being "superfluous buildings." Very possibly the bells and lead of Thorney were included in the lots bought by John Core, a speculative grocer of London. The bells in this list of purchases numbered fifty-six, and were conveyed to London, where they were found to weigh 4,800lb. and to be worth £432. To collect these the expenses are found recorded in the ministers' accounts. We there learn the cost of dismantling the bells and belfries, the expenses of labourers in casting down and breaking up the bells, the price paid for "hammers, iron wedges, crowes of iron, lescheselles," and other instruments bought and used at different times for breaking up the bells. Also the cost of barrels bought at different times, and tuns to put the broken metal in to carry it to London. In one account labourers were occupied and carts used for seventy-five days, and at the end the receiver stated that he had got together lead and bells amounting to £5,898 17s. 3½d.



CHAPTER XXV

Whitby

IT is difficult to imagine any more impressive sight than Whitby Abbey must have presented to ships passing along the Yorkshire coast before the sixteenth-century wreckers had dismantled and defaced it. The church was 300 feet by 69 feet, with transepts 150 feet across, and the vaulting was 60 feet above the floor. The central tower rose far into the air to serve as a landmark by day, whilst by night the lights of St Hilda's tower shone far out to sea "from high Whitby's cloister'd pile" to cheer and guide those who sailed in ships, over that long stretch of water without a harbour. "It is impossible," says a modern writer, "to imagine anything more grand than this noble minster when complete, rising majestically 250 feet above the sea, and approached across the deep valleys and mountain wastes of the Vale of Pickering.... In the midst of the storm or sea-fog the chime of its great bells cheered the sailors seeking refuge on that terrible coast, and in the darkness of night the pale gleam of its lights was a beacon visible leagues away—to that seaman's eye it seemed the lustrous form of St Hilda herself standing in one of the northern windows and guiding him with her lamp."

The story of Whitby, or as it was then called Streaneshalch—which St Bede tells us meant "Lighthouse bay"—goes back on the earliest days of Saxon Christianity. In 655 Oswy, King of Northumbria, attacked by Penda of Mercia and Cadwalla, vowed to found twelve monasteries if successful in the fight that was beeing forced upon him. He was victorious, and keeping his word sent his daughter to be brought up in the monastery of Hartlepool, over which Hilda, the great-niece of Edwin, presided. Two years later, in 657, Hilda and Oswy's daughter Helflad went from Hartlepool to establish, on one of the estates promised by the King, the monastery of Streaneshalch. Here St Hilda for a long time ruled a double community of men and women, and as she was eminent for her knowledge and piety, people of all ranks came to seek her counsel and aid; many of the monks of this monastery became priests, and several were raised to the episcopate.

We have no detailed account of the building raised by St Hilda at the first foundation of the house. We may however, conjecture that it was large, since it not only contained the two communities, but in 664 a council to determine the controversy concerning the celebration of Easter and the shape of the clerical tonsure was held in the monastery. Of the church the only indication that we have is in the old life of St Gregory, where we learn that besides the High Altar there were in the first church two other altars dedicated respectively to SS. Peter and Gregory.

WHITBY ABBEY AND TOWN

BROCKLEY

Whitby

Hilda took a considerable part in determining the issue of the Synod of Whitby over which Oswy presided in person. With St Hilda's name was linked many a legend in the country round. Some are recorded in Scott's lines:

> They told, how in their convent cell
> A Saxon princess once did dwell,
> The lovely Edelfled.
> And how, of thousand snakes, each one
> Was changed into a coil of stone
> When holy Hilda prayed;
> Themselves, within their holy bound,
> Their stony folds are often found.
> They told, how sea-fowls' pinions fail
> As over Whitby's towers they sail
> And, sinking down, with flutterings faint,
> They do their homage to the saint.

Hilda died, according to the *Saxon Chronicle*, in 680, in the sixty-sixth year of her age. Among her monks at Streaneshalch was the first native poet Ceadmon, who had been a herdsman. St Bede tells us that the highest flights of poetry were so natural to him that he dreamed in verse and even composed excellent poems in his sleep, which he was afterwards able to repeat in his waking hours. The account of his death with its simple faith in the future life is one of the most beautiful pieces in St Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*.

Hilda was succeeded as abbess by King Oswy's daughter Aefleda, and St Bede tells us that the latter died in 714. It was during her rule that the remains of her father were removed from the grave on the field of battle where he had fallen, and were brought to a

tomb in the abbey which he had founded. Here they were buried "with the rest of the bodies of our kings," as the unknown monk, the author of the Life of St Gregory, says, an expression which gives a precise indication of the position the church held in Northumbria in the early days of Christianity.

Streaneshalch continued to prosper after the death of St Hilda and her successor, Aelfleda, till about the year 867. From the year 866 the Danish invasions assume a new and more terrible character. Previously plunder had been the object of the frequent raids of the Northmen; now they dreamt of conquest, On November 1, 867, "the army," as it is called, stormed and took York and quickly spread over Deira, plundering and destroying. Every monastery and church in the province was left a heap of smoking ruins. Amongst others the abbey of St Hilda perished utterly. The Danes, under Hunguar and Hubba, landed in Dunsley Bay, two miles to the west of the monastery, and proceeded to plunder and destroy it. The community were dispersed, and probably many were slaughtered in their cloister, whilst one monk is said to have anticipated the evil day by removing the relics of St Hilda to Glastonbury. For more than two centuries the site of Streaneshalch remained waste and desolate, but the memory of the old religious home was preserved in the name given to the few huts which in process of time sprung up round about. It was called by the people Presteby, which signified the dwelling-place of the priests or religious.

When next the abbey rises from its ruins it is under the name of Whitby. William the Conqueror had already made good his hold over the country when in 1074 three monks departed from Evesham on a mission to restore some of the wasted monasteries of Northumbria. The story may be seen in Simeon of Durham's *History*, and the names he gives are those of Aldwin of Winchelcombe, Alfury a deacon, and Reinfrid, who from the profession of arms had betaken himself to the religious life in the cloister at Evesham. These monks took with them only the necessary books and vestments for Mass, which were carried on the back of a patient ass. The first of the little band of monks remained at Newcastle, the second established himself at Jarrow, and Reinfrid refounded Whitby as a monastery of Benedictines, being helped by the gifts of Hugh, Earl of Chester, and of William de Percy.

Reinfrid appears to have lived till 1084, and was followed in his office of prior by two of the family of Percy, the brother and the son of one of the founders. In the reign of Henry I, the abbey had grown in numbers and importance, and the King added considerably to its possessions, and granted to it the dues of a port or haven at Whitby. At this time the number of the community would appear to have been thirty-six or thirty-eight. At some time between 1109-1127 the monastery was created an abbey, and in the middle of the same century it was plundered and at least par-

tially destroyed by some pirates from Norway who had landed on the coast.

The history of Whitby during the succeeding centuries was even and uneventful, with apparently little to disturb the peace and harmony of the Benedictine mode of life. It was during this time that there was built up the church, portions of which now stand on the cliff, desolate and uncared for, and slowly crumbling to dust. Every vestige of the conventual buildings has vanished, the materials having been utilized in a neighbouring building. The Early English presbytery of the great church remains, and shows that the edifice must have been one of the many architectural glories of medieval England. The seven bays of choir and sanctuary, the exquisite transepts of three bays with rich buttresses, the two tiers of graceful lancet windows in the front and portions of the decorated nave still stand and makes us sigh for the rest. The church was 360 feet long, the tower 150 feet high, and each arm west and east was 150 feet long.

In 1527, on the death of abbot Thomas York, John Topcliffe or Henhem was chosen to succeed to the abbacy. The times were perilous and it was not long before the King's policy, with regard to the religious houses, became evident. Abbot John from the first was troubled by the royal visitors and the impossible injunctions they left behind them. He wrote his doubts to Crumwell and pointed out the difficulty of governing any religious house under the circumstances; but

WHITBY ABBEY FROM THE SOUTH-WEST

with what result does not appear. In 1537, under the pretext that the risings in the north must have been much countenanced by the monks, Henry seized the revenues of Whitby. After unavailing protests the abbot is said to have "certified" Crumwell "that he would resign," but he vigorously denied any desire to desert his post. Layton and Legh, two of the most notorious of the royal visitors, went to Whitby to keep him to his supposed word or to "find any cause of deprivation." They wrote thence to Crumwell to ask whether the all-powerful minister had anyone he intended to appoint, or if not whether he would leave it to them "to find a man habill both for the King's honour and discharge of his conscience and for your worship and also profit."

Crumwell, however, did not think well to leave the matter to Doctors Layton and Legh. In October 1538, having secured the resignation, he despatched two agents, upon whom he could rely, with instructions to get the community to leave the choice of a new superior to them, when they should be instructed whom they were to nominate. This the monks refused, upon which the agents tried to get them to allow Crumwell to appoint, but as they were still recalcitrant, and as the agents had with them "the *congé d'eslier* and full election from the King," they thought it best to delay the election till they could hear further. On this the prior, Robert Woodhouse, and others went up to interview the minister on the subject. Immediately they had gone the

agents renewed their solicitations of the community, and on October 30, 1538, the monks gave way and signed a paper in the presence of Tristram Teste and his fellow commissioners allowing Crumwell to appoint. The effect may be judged by the royal appointment of Henry Davell on December 9, 1538, by whom the monastery was surrendered to the King on December 14, 1540.

Charlton concludes his account of Whitby thus: "after being plundered of the wood, the timber and the lead upon its roof, and also of its bells and everything else belonging thereto that could be sold, it was left standing with its stone walls, a mere skeleton of what it had formerly been, to crumble away by degrees into dust or to form a heap of rubbish which might merely show passengers in future ages that there Whitby formerly stood. It is true some part of this lead was laid upon the church of St Mary, which was still permitted to be the parish church of Whitby, and which seems till then to have had only a thatched roof; but that lead was only a small part of the whole, and all the remainder was carried away and converted into money."

CHAPTER XXVI

Woburn

WOBURN ABBEY, a monastery of the Cistercian Order, had its origin in the piety of Hugh de Bolbeck in 1145. Desiring to establish some religious house, he came to Fountains and obtained the help of the abbot in erecting a monastery at a place called Woburn, in Bedfordshire, which, like all Cistercian foundations, was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. As the first community, thirteen of the monks of Fountains were detached from their own house and sent to colonise Wóburn, under Alan, one of those who had gone to Fountains from St Mary's, York.

The new foundation was at first very poor; in fact, although from the extant charters it is apparent that it did not lack benefactors, the endowment was so scanty that after struggling for more than eighty years, in 1234 it was broken up for a time and the community scattered in other monasteries of the Order, till the debts that had been contracted at Woburn could be paid. How long this dispersal continued does not appear, but it is certain that before the close of the century the name of the community stands in the taxation of Pope Nicholas, and that in 1297 Robert de Stoke was elected abbot. It never became a very rich

house, however, and its net revenue was returned in the time of Henry VIII as slightly under £392.

Of its history little is known but the closing drama which ended with the execution of the abbot and the confiscation of the abbey possessions. The first incident affords us an insight into the anxieties and trials experienced by the religious superiors during the few years prior to the suppression of the monasteries. As the autumn of 1536 drew on to a close, reports from all sides must have come into the cloisters of the scenes of destruction and sacrilege which everywhere were being enacted in the work of dissolving the smaller religious houses, of the pitiable case of the ejected religious and of the rumours, that found ready credence, of projected suppression on a much larger scale. It requires little stretch of the imagination to picture the dismay with which the religious must have listened to the current reports of violence and injustice. But a glimpse of the truth is afforded in the depositions which at the time were made against the abbot of Woburn.

When the report of the execution of the Carthusians of the London Charter House reached the monastery, the abbot assembled his brethren in their Chapter House, and having recited the psalm *Deus venerunt gentes*, he spoke as follows: "Brethren, this is a perilous time. Such a scourge was never heard since Christ's passion. You have heard how good men do suffer death. My brethren, this is undoubtedly for our offence, for ye have heard that so long as the Children of Israel

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WOBURN ABBEY

kept the Commandments of God, so long their enemies had no power over them, but God took vengeance of their enemies. But when they broke God's Commandments, then they were subdued, and so be we. Therefore let us be sorry, and undoubtedly He will take vengeance on our enemies, these heretics who cause so many good men to suffer thus. Alas! it is a piteous case that so much Christian blood be shed. Therefore, my good brethren, for the love of God, let everyone of you devoutly pray and say this psalm *Deus venerunt*, etc., with the versicle *Exurgat Deus*, etc., this same psalm to be said every Friday, immediately after the Litany, prostrate, when ye lie before the High Altar and doubt not God will allay this storm."

But the help Abbot Hobbes's simple faith in Providence expected did not come to him. He and his monastery were destroyed in the great catastophe which overwhelmed so many in those days of Tudor despotism. The story of Woburn is pathetic, and perhaps more so than that of any other English house, by reason of the touching details that have been preserved to us. In it the veil, which perhaps fortunately shrouds the heart-breaking incidents of the general Dissolution, is slightly lifted, and we are afforded a glimpse of the fear and hope and despair which by turns filled the hearts of the religious in the time during which the sword was kept hanging over their heads. Paralysed by the masterful policy of Crumwell, it seems as if their hearts were chilled by the thought of the uncertain

fate awaiting them, whilst the very source of the religious life was being poisoned by the injunctions and irritating visitations, the object of which was to make the cloister unbearable, and drive the monks to rebel or surrender their monasteries.

Richard Hobbes had been abbot of Woburn for some years when he and his monks, at the royal command, took the Oath of the Royal supremacy. It was clearly against the abbot's better judgement, and that of some at least of the community, that they had sworn as commanded and had not resisted. Dan Ralph, the subprior, subsequently acknowledged this and begged the King's pardon for it, and for the "erroneous estimation of Mr More and the bishop of Rochester, whose death he a great while thought meritorious, wishing he had died with them." In fact, evidently to save the abbot if possible, Dan Ralph declared that it was he who, "by counsel and menace" had persuaded him to take the required Oath. Another of the community, Dan Lawrence, the sexton, declared that when he was sworn he could not touch the Book (of the Gospels) on account of the numbers, and so considered his conscience free, although he had signed "the carte of profession."

According to the gossip, even at the beginning of 1536, when the bill for suppressing the lesser monasteries had passed, it was said that Woburn "and other more should go down ere Twelthtide." But in reality it was not until 1538 that any steps were taken by Crumwell to bring about the Dissolution. The final catastrophe was

hastened by certain malicious informations of discontented monks, who at Woburn as in many monasteries in England at this time, served Crumwell as spies and furnished him with welcome accusations of their superiors and brethren.

On May 12, 1538, Abbot Hobbes and certain of his monks found themselves in the Tower of London, where they were subjected to a severe examination. One of the charges brought up against him, which he did not deny, was the sermon he had made to his community on the death of the Carthusians in London. Besides this, when the Act dissolving the monasteries was passed in 1536, the abbot had called his subjects to chapter, and, according to the depositions of four monks, had addressed them "with suchlike exhortation in the said Chapter House, with lamentable mournings for the dissolving of them, enjoined us to sing *Salvator mundi salva nos omnes* every day after Lauds. And we murmured at it and were not contented to sing it for such a cause, and so we did omit it divers times. For this cause the abbot came into the chapter and did in manner rebuke us and said we were bound to obey his commands by our profession. And so he did command us to sing it again with versicles *Exurgat Deus*, etc., and enjoined us to say at every Mass that every priest did sing a collect, *Deus qui contritorum*, etc. And he said, if we did thus with good and pure devotion, God would handle the matter so that it should be to the comfort of all England, and so show us mercy as He showed to

the Children of Israel. And surely brethren, he said, there will come over us a good man who will re-edify these monasteries again that are now suppressed *quia potens est Deus de lapidibus istis suscitare filios Abrahæ.*"

But during the time of waiting for the doom of their house there was inevitable excitement, contention and recrimination among the monks of Woburn, with cross accusations of one party against the other. In the "shaving house," one told another that he belonged to the "new world." Bitter words passed, and one of those there present declared that "neither thou nor yet any of us shall do well as long as we forsake our head of the church, the Pope"; to which his opponent replied calling him "a false, perjured knave to his prince." Another monk wrote to Crumwell to complain of his abbot that, having spoken against the quality of the bread supplied in the monastic refectory, he was told "to go further and fare worse."

These and other tales carried to the too willing ear of the King's minister brought the abbot under suspicion. He was arrested with others of his monks and lodged in the Tower. At the end he had tried to anticipate the event by a joint letter from himself and his monks handing over themselves and their monastery to to Henry's mercy. They declared their full recognition of the King as Supreme Head and protested their innocence of the charges brought against them. Their submission, however, came too late; the reply was the seizure of the abbot and others of the monks.

THE ABBOT'S OAK, WOBURN

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In his examination Richard Hobbes, the abbot of Woburn, practically allowed all that had been advanced against him. His objection to the "Royal Headship," he urges, was not out of malice "but only for a scrupulous conscience he then had touching the continuance of the bishop of Rome," and he confessed that when the papal Bulls were sent up to Doctor Petre, he got Dan Robert Salford "to write the principal Bulls in a fair hand," and the junior monks, not priests, to transcribe the others in a running hand, so that when the quarrel between the King and the Pope was settled he might have evidence of his old privileges and exemptions. "These copies," he said, "remained yet in my chamber at my coming away."

He confessed also having likened Henry to Nebuchadonasor taking away the sacred vessels of the temple: to having spoken against the "new learning" and "in all audiences from time to time" that "I have stood stiffly in my opinion of the old trade unto this present day, maintaining the part of the Bishop of Rome, so far as I durst, thinking that it was the true way, and the contrary of the King's part but usurpation desiderated by flattery and adulation." He fully admitted, further, that he had wished, and had said that he wished that he had died with the Carthusians, More and Fisher. He also confessed that he now deplored the suppression of so many monasteries and that for all these troubles he had blamed the advice of Crumwell and the unfortunate divorce question.

This ample confession, evidently made by the advice of Crumwell, pitifully reveals the mind, heart and soul of Abbot Hobbes, in all their many perplexities. He had before him all the horrors of prison and the thought of a terrible and ignominious death. Under stress of this haunting fear, before his examination is over, in accents more pitiful still, he admits that after all he may have been mistaken and pleads for pardon.

But such a surrender as the abbot brought himself to make in the last resource was useless. Henry had passed the stage when any sentiment of compassion for human weakness or pity for any living soul could find a place in his heart. The abbot was apparently tried at Lincoln, and in those days of constructive verbal treason he was pre-condemned by his own confession. With him, in the same charge, were arraigned two of his monks, Lawrence Bloxam and Richard Barnes. All three were found guilty and ordered to be drawn, hanged and quartered.

The sentence was carried into effect at Woburn itself. Tradition points to an old tree, now called "the abbot's oak," in front of the place where the abbey buildings stood, as the gallows from which Abbot Hobbes, his two monks and the vicar of Puddington paid the extreme penalty for expressing their opinions on these matters of conscience and disapproving of the King's proceedings. The possessions of the abbey, producing a clear income of about £400 a year, passed into the royal hands by virtue of the

new interpretation of the law of treason. On September 29, the royal receiver of attainted lands acknowledged the receipt of £266 12s. from the sales of the Woburn monastic goods. A few years later the property was granted to Sir John Russell, whose descendants still enjoy it. Not a vestige of the church or of the monastery building now exists. The old pollard-like oak, however, remains, and fastened against it were some verses by Whiffen, the historian of the house of Bedford, in which he rejoices that the "old memorial of the mitred monk" has lived to flourish in a brighter day.

CHAPTER XXVII

Waltham Abbey

IN Essex, on level land near to the river Lea, and with the rising ground of Epping Forest behind it, stands what is left of the abbey of Waltham Holy Cross. For some centuries before the suppression it was a house of Canons Regular of St Augustine. The members of this Order followed a rule founded on the instructions of St Augustine and approved at Rome in Councils held by Popes Nicholas II and Alexander II, which insisted on these canons embracing an entire community of life as practised by all other regulars. The adoption of this code facilitated the formation of bodies of regular canons, not connected either with cathedrals or with colleges of priests, and during the twelfth century the foundations made throughout Europe by the Augustinian Canons Regular were very numerous. Here in England in the sixteenth century, they possessed more than 170 houses, two of which, namely Waltham Cross and Cirencester, were mitred abbeys. These canons served also one English cathedral, Carlisle.

The first foundation at Waltham, and indeed the adoption of the name of "Holy Cross" as the dedication, was brought about, according to legend, in a

mysterious manner. In the reign of King Canute a pious smith, so runs the story, received a supernatural intimation that he would find a crucifix buried on the hill at Montacute, in Somerset. The parish priest was consulted and thought that the matter should be examined into at once. At the head of a procession, praying and singing the Litanies, this priest accompanied the smith to the spot which had been pointed out to him in his dream and which, when on the ground, he fully recognized. Here, after much digging, the searchers came upon a wonderful crucifix carved in black marble. The discovery naturally made a great impression at the time, and, indeed, the fact suggested the war-cry of the English at the battle of Senlac: "Holy Cross, out, out!" The lord of the manor of Montacute at the time of the discovery was named Tovi, a well-known soldier who was standard-bearer to King Canute. By his direction the crucifix was placed on an ornamented car, to which were harnessed twelve red oxen and twelve white cows, and the ultimate destination was left to their instincts, guided, of course, by Providence. The spot at which they ultimately stopped, and which was thus pointed out by fate as the place where the cross was to remain, was Waltham, a small and common hunting box in Hertfordshire. Here Tovi, with the King's help, established two priests to act as guardians of the crucifix thus so strangely found at Montacute and providentially brought to Waltham. From the first this cross was believed to possess miraculous powers, and amongst

other favours thought to have been obtained at its shrine was the cure of Harold, son of Earl Godwin, from the palsy. In recognition and gratitude for this, Godwin began the building of a large church and established twelve priests in charge, in place of the two who had served the small chapel previously.

The church thus begun with what the chronicler calls *columnæ sublimes*—marvellous columns—and arches connecting them, was finished in 1060 and was consecrated on May 3 of that year. It was 278 feet in length; and across the transept it was 94 feet. The walls were all in stone, and there is said to have been much gilding over the altar, with gilt and embossed metal plates round the capitals. At the time of the dedication, Edward the Confessor, who was present, gave his royal charter confirming Harold's liberal donation of seventeen manors to the church of Waltham.

On his way to the decisive battle of Hastings, in which he lost his life, Harold came to Waltham to pay a visit to the shrine, and to offer up his devotions there at the great cross. His body, after having been buried first on the field of battle under a cairn of stones, was brought back at the request of his mother and buried in the church he had lately finished at Waltham. According to some authorities, the Conqueror, although he permitted this burial, seems to have treated the place with a certain hardness and unfairness. Although the canons appear to have kept

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their lands intact, William is said to have dispossessed them of most of the movable wealth with which Harold had enriched them, and to have carried plate, jewels and other movable property off to Normandy. The list given by the scribe of these riches is not uninteresting. There were, we are told, seven shrines for relics, three gold and four silver gilt, all ornamented with precious stones, four Gospel books bound in gold and silver and jewelled, four great thuribles of gold and silver, six candlesticks, two of gold and the rest of silver, three great gold and silver jugs of Greek work, four crosses wrought in gold and silver with jewels. There were also "most precious chasubles, worked with gold and gems," etc.

The college of secular canons established by Harold at Waltham remained in existence for a century after the Conquest. As regards the buildings, in 1125-6 the apsidal choir was removed in order to make way for another. Before the work was completed, however, the King had obtained permission from the Pope to substitute Augustinian canons for the secular priests of Harold's foundation. This was done in 1177, and on Whitsun Eve the bishop of London inducted the Regular canons to the church. The religious came from Osney, Cirencester and St Osyth's, and the first temporary superior was appointed in the person of Ralph, a canon of Cirencester. In the same year, however, Walter de Gaunt was made first abbot of the house, and King Henry II, besides confirming the

charter of the Confessor, added to the endowments of the Augustinian abbey. In 1182 a great meeting of ecclesiastics and nobles was held in Waltham abbey church in furtherance of the Crusades. Henry II, who presided in person as an example to his people to take part in this great movement of Christendom against the Turks, promised to devote 2,000 marks of silver and 500 marks of gold to the expedition. At the same time he manifested his desire to rebuild the church at Waltham, and the north clerestory may be a portion of what was then projected.

In 1222 Hugh de Nerville, one of the most popular heroes of the age, was buried at Waltham Holy Cross. Matthew Paris tells us that his prowess was proved in the Holy Land by his attacking and killing a lion single-handed. The same authority says that he was laid to rest "in a noble sculptured marble tomb," which no doubt went the way of most monuments at the suppression of the abbey in the sixteenth century.

The new choir was finished in 1242, and dedicated by the bishop of Norwich in the presence of many bishops who had assembled for the consecration of St Paul's, London, which took place at this time. Now also the western arch of the tower was filled up with the reredos of the parish church which was the nave. This nave is mainly the work of the eleventh century and remains much as it was; the present tower was added in the reign of Queen Mary. The channel-cut pillars are said to remind people of Durham Cathedral, and both were

probably built about the same time in the reign of Harold.

Richard II, whilst residing in the place within the abbey precincts called "Rome-land," received the news of the rising of Wat Tyler's people. For sixteen weeks the body of Edward I, in 1307, lay "beside the tomb of Harold and was then taken to his burial past the beautiful cross which he had raised in loving memory of Queen Eleanor."

Besides the church or rather the nave of the church, the mutilated abbey gateway also still exists, and Harold's bridge still spans a neighbouring brook. The conventual buildings have long disappeared together with the greater portion of the church. Robert Fuller was the last abbot, having received the charge on September 4, 1526. He subsequently became prior of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield, and held the two offices together. On March 23, 1539, he surrendered the abbey into the King's hands, the rental then being computed at over £900 a year. The site, etc., of the house was almost immediately granted by Henry VIII to Sir Anthony Denny for thirty-one years, and on his death his widow purchased the property from the Crown for over £3,000, from whom the present owner, Sir H. Wade, is descended.

There is no detailed account of the work of dismantling Waltham Abbey at the suppression, nor of the means taken to get rid of the superfluous buildings. It was in the hands of one whose name appears on

many of the accounts and who once signs himself "Francis Jobson, Gentleman." It is probable that the portion of the great church which we still possess was saved from the wreck by being claimed by the people of Waltham as the parish church of the place. Francis Jobson seems to have calculated the value of the lead upon the whole church, which he sets down as being 400 fodders, and worth at least £1,600. He counts the value of twelve bells to be broken up and sold as bell metal. At this same time, Michaelmas, 1539, he estimates that lead and bells from the Essex religious houses to the value of £3,339 6s. 6d. remained unsold. The goods of Waltham Holy Cross which had been disposed of had produced £202 16s. 10d. and the buildings, etc., another £599 7s. 3½d. Besides this 1169 ounces of plate, consisting of 479 ounces of silver gilt; 251 of parcel gilt and 439 of silver had been sent to the King. Also there had been reserved for His Majesty "a cup called a serpentine"; nine copes, three chasubles and three tunicles. Two of these copes were of red tissue with the images of the Five Wounds, etc.

Sir Richard Ryche, Knight, the Chancellor of the Court of Augmentation, subsequently granted to the abbot of Waltham and his fellow canons pensions for having surrendered their abbey into the King's hands.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

Waverley

NEAR FARNHAM, in Surrey, stand the few remnants of the abbey of Waverley. The river Wey flows by its site, and a mile or two away to the west the hills, which form the well-known "Hogsback," rise from the plain and stretch away towards Guildford and Dorking. Mr Francis Joseph Baigent, in his monograph on this monastery, says of it that the fragments of the buildings certainly do not enable us to realize that upon this spot there once stood a magnificent and grand church of Early English style, exceeding in its dimensions several of our cathedrals, and larger than the abbey church of Romsey or the priory churches of Christ Church, Hampshire, and St Saviour's, Southwick. In length the church at Waverley was 322ft, and the transept measured 165ft across. From the west end to the transept crossing the measurement was 195ft, and the general dimensions of this fine church were almost identical with the great minster at Fountains, which is still sufficiently intact to display its noble proportions. The latter is said to have been forty years building, whilst the erection of the former occupied seventy-five years.

Waverley was the first abbey of Cistercians founded

in England, and for this reason its abbot had pre-eminence over all the other superiors of the Order in this country. William Giffard, the second bishop of Winchester after the Conquest, brought over these white monks from Aumone—one of their monasteries in Normandy. They had been founded about thirty years before by Robert, abbot of Molesme, influenced by Stephen Harding, an Englishman and a professed monk of Sherbourne. The Order quickly spread. "The members," says a modern writer, "soon became noted for the greatest excellence in the professions of agriculture, architecture and commerce; they established granges or farms upon their outlying estates, for the more effectual utilization of the productions of the land; their stately style of architecture—combining use with elegance and avoiding unnecessary display, as illustrated in the present day by the ruins of Furness, Melrose, Kirkstall, Fountains and Tintern—has been alike the wonder and envy of architects; their merchandise of wool and corn was noted for its superiority over that of less assiduous farmers."

The foundations of the abbey of the Blessed Mary of Waverley, were laid by Bishop Giffard on November 24, 1128. Furness, colonised from Savigny, became Cistercian about the same time; and Tintern, Rievaulx, Fountains and others quickly followed, until by the end of the century about 120 separate houses of the Order were flourishing on English soil. According to the old saying: *Bernardus valles amabat*—Bernard loved

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the valleys—the Cistercian houses were first planted in solitudes and in out-of-the-way and uncultivated places. By a rule of the Order these foundations were all placed under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, and it was a rule that no other monastery, even of its own Order, was to be built within a certain distance.

Waverley quickly gave evidence of life and sent out several colonies of sons to found daughter houses: Garendon, in Leicestershire, was the first, in 1133, followed three years later by Ford, in Devon; after which it established Combe, in Warwickshire, and Thame, in Oxfordshire. These daughter houses in turn founded seven Cistercian abbeys, so that in all eleven monasteries, directly or indirectly, came out of Waverley.

Bishop Giffard, the founder, did not long survive the establishment of the white monks at Waverley, dying within two months of the date assigned to the foundation. Bishop Henry de Blois, who succeeded him in the See of Winchester, was a Benedictine monk and brother of King Stephen, who had been abbot of Glastonbury. He proved himself a great benefactor to the infant community, and gave the monks lands and the right of free pasturage, and his example in this was followed by others.

The story of the house from its first foundation in 1128 to its suppression in the sixteenth century does not contain very much of general interest. This will always be the case in an observant monastery, as the

tendency of human nature in all ages is to note and comment upon all irregularity of life rather than upon regularity. The vigour and popularity of the house, however, are evinced, not alone by the colonies it sent forth, but by the fact that in 1187 its community consisted of seventy choir monks and 126 lay brethren.

The leader of the colony from Aumone, Abbot John, died at Midhurst, in Sussex, on his way back from the General Chapter at Citeaux, almost directly the foundations of Waverley had been laid. During the abbacy of the second abbot, Gilbert, the four foundations above recorded were made. The story of the troubles of one body of these colonists is instructive. The twelve monks arrived at their new home with their abbot, Richard, on May 3, 1136, and little more than a year later their founder and benefactor died before he had made adequate provision for the community. The spot chosen was at a place called Brightley, in Devonshire, not far from Okehampton, where the connexion of the monks with the place is still recorded by the name 'Abbey Ford Wood." The situation was barren and deserted, and after the death of their friend the community was destitute of help and unable to find even the wherewith to live upon. After five years of hard struggles the monks determined to abandon their endeavour, to acknowledge their failure, and to return to their mother house of Waverley. They had already gone part of their way thither when a benefactress unexpectedly appeared, gave them her manor house for

a time, and then built them a monastery afterwards to be known as Ford Abbey, from the passage over the river Axe, which then existed at this spot.

The annals of Waverley in 1201 record a terrific storm on July 8. The buildings of the monastery were inundated and much damaged, whilst the standing crops with their hay and flax were entirely destroyed. This brought upon them such poverty and destitution that the monks were for a time obliged to disperse and seek refuge in other houses of their Order. In 1203, however, their situation seems to have improved somewhat, since in that year William, rector of Broadwater, in Sussex, began to set the foundation of their church for them. In 1214 sufficient progress had been made to enable Aylbin, bishop of Ferns, to consecrate five altars in the church, to dedicate the cemetery and to "bless and touch with chrism" the consecration crosses. Three more altars were dedicated in 1226, and two again in 1231, so that in the great monastic church of Waverley, as we know from the annals, there were at least eleven altars.

In 1233 the annals chronicle another destructive storm on July 11. The cloisters were turned into rivers, we are told, and the floods swept right through the buildings, doing great damage. Bridges were carried away, stone walls fell before the pressure of water, which in many places was as much as eight feet deep.

On September 21, 1278, the great church, being

entirely finished and out of debt, was solemnly dedicated by Nicholas de Ely, bishop of Winchester. Six abbots and a great number of ecclesiastics and lay people were present. It was calculated that at the banquet after the ceremony 7,000 people were entertained in the monastery, and for the eight days which followed all who came were refreshed at the cost of the bishop of Winchester, the constant friend and benefactor of the monks. Two years later, on his death, bishop de Ely was found to have selected Waverley as his burial place, and he was the only bishop of Winchester in pre-Reformation times who selected a burial place out of his own cathedral.

The great pestilence of 1349 carried off several of the community and many servants of Waverley Abbey. Abbot John, who had been elected May 14, 1344, was one of the first victims in the early part of the year 1349. He was followed by another abbot named John, who was blessed by bishop de Edyndon in his private chapel at Esher on May 24. This abbot ruled the monastery till 1361, when he, too, fell a victim to the second outbreak of the plague.

We may pass over two centuries of cloister life at Waverley and come to the sixteenth century. William Alynge, the last abbot, was chosen about 1533, and so at once came upon troublesome times. In 1535 Henry VIII constituted Thomas Crumwell his Vicar-General in all ecclesiastical matters and Visitor-General of the monasteries. Crumwell forthwith appointed certain men on whom

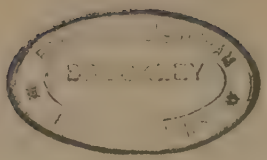
he could rely to proceed to the work of examining the various religious houses and colleges. The three most notorious amongst these deputies were named London, Layton and Legh. In October, 1535, as Leyton found that he would not be comfortable were he to stop at "a priory of minors and a priory of canons which lay towards Chichester," he pushed on, as he told Crumwell, "to an abbey of Cistercians, called Waverley."

Apparently the doctor did not enjoy his stay at the abbey, as an existing letter shows. This paper is also interesting as proving that at this time, through the tyranny of the Crown in forcing lay servants upon the monasteries, the unfortunate monks were no longer masters in their own houses. "I have licensed the bringer, the abbot of Waverley," he writes, "to repair unto you for liberty to survey his husbandry, whereupon consisteth the wealth of his monastery. The man is honest, but none of the children of Solomon: every monk within his house is his fellow and every servant his master. Mr Treasurer and other gentlemen hath put servants unto him, whom the poor [man] dare neither command nor displease. Yesterday, early in the morning, sitting in my chamber in examination, I could neither get bread, nor drink, neither fire of those knaves, till I was fretished [i.e., numb with cold]; and the abbot durst not speak to them. I called all before me and forgot their names, but took from every man the keys of his office and made new officers for my time here, perchance as stark knaves as the other. It shall be expedient

for you to give him a lesson and tell the poor fool what to do. Among his monks I have found corruption of the worst sort, because they dwell in the forest of all company."

This visit was quickly followed in the early spring of 1536, by the Act of Parliament dissolving all monasteries below the value of £200 a year. As the net income of Waverley was according to the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, only £178 8s. 3½d., it must have been at once apparent to the abbot and his community that their doom was pronounced. William, Abbot Alyne, however, endeavoured to avert the impending suppression by sending to Crumwell an earnest and touching appeal. "Pleaseth your mastership," he writes, "I received your letters of the 7th day of this present month, and hath endeavoured myself to accomplish the contents of them, and have sent your mastership the true extent, value, and account of our monastery. Beseeching your good mastership, for the love of Christ's passion, to help to the preservation of this poor monastery that we your beadsmen may remain in the service of God, with the meanest living that any poor man may live with in the world. So to continue in the service of Almighty Jesus and to pray for the estate of our prince and your mastership. Therefore instantly praying you—and my poor brethren with weeping eyes desire you to help them, in this world no creatures in more trouble. And so we remain depending upon the comfort that shall come to us from you—serving God daily at Waverley."

The appeal had no success; and it is difficult to suppose that by this time the monks themselves were really in any doubt as to their ultimate fate. Waverley was one of the first to fall, for as early as July 20, 1536, it was suppressed and the inmates distributed among other houses of the Order, for which there was some short respite. The same day the King granted the site of the abbey, its buildings, etc. to Sir William Fitz-William, the treasurer of his household, who, as appears in the letter from Layton given above, had taken such an interest in the place that he had already quartered his servants upon the abbot, a year before he had got legal possession of his expected prize. The fact that Sir William Fitz-William at once obtained possession of the abbey "in as full and ample a manner as William Alynge, the late abbot," possessed it and that he no doubt immediately entered upon his new acquisition, explains why on the Rolls of Ministers' Accounts there are no details of the sales of the movable goods or of the wrecking of the church and of the domestic buildings. Time, however, has not failed to bring a dire destruction upon the whole, and now only two fragments of buildings, both Early English, remain, abutting on the river Wey, and Waverley is probably best known to the present generation as that religious house which gave to Sir Walter Scott a title for his immortal series of romances.



CHAPTER XXIX

Westminster

THERE is but one Westminster. Other monasteries can claim better positions, or longer histories or perhaps some more wonderful or special feature of architecture; but none can recall historic memories like Westminster. It is a place the influence of which grows upon the mind the more it is known and the deeper it is studied. The inspiring height of the nave and choir; the wonderful transept front; the broken pile of chapels over-topped by Henry VII's crowning work; the interior so grand, so lofty, so graceful; the mysterious apsidal presbytery with its radiating chapels; all these features of the buildings and many more are less impressive even than the story which attaches to the walls, and which makes Westminster the most marvellous National Monument in the world. Here most of our kings were crowned, and here the most illustrious of our dead have found their last resting places.

The history of St Peter's, Westminster, goes back into the mists of legend. Some have spoken of a church as existing on an island in the marsh lands of Westminster in the early days of British Christianity; others have put its foundation in the times

of Ethelbert of Kent and the first Saxon converts, whilst William of Malmesbury gives the credit to St Mellitus himself. One pretty and ancient story recounts the supernatural consecration of the church on the night before St Mellitus himself had arranged to perform the ceremony. Edric, the ferryman, it is said, on that night brought over the river from Lambeth a strange priest, who proved to be St Peter himself. Having ordered the fisherman to remain, the stranger betook himself to the humble church on Thorney island. Thence in a brief time afterwards came the sound of singing, the gleam of tapers and the smell of incense, and the boatman venturing near, saw that an innumerable host from Heaven accompanied the Apostle in the ceremonial, whilst everything and person was illuminated by a supernatural light. The dedication having been accomplished, St Peter returned to the fisherman and declaring who he was, told him to go at daybreak and seek Mellitus and tell him that in proof of what he had done the bishop would find the marks of consecration crosses on the walls of the church. As a further pledge St Peter bade the man sink his net in the river, and carry to the bishop one of the fish he should take. This he did, and captured such a netful of salmon that his boat could hardly contain them. For centuries after, in memory of this, the monks enjoyed a tithe of fish in the river from Jenlade to Staines, and every year a Thames salmon, the first of the season, was offered

at the High Altar, and the fisherman who brought it was feasted in the hall. Only less wonderful than the tale of the dedication was the story that St John the Evangelist, in the pilgrimage which legend assigns to him until the second coming of our Lord, once found his way to Westminster and trod the aisles of the church.

Hardly more certain than these pretty legends are the indications of the history of Thorney in Saxon times. The restorations supposed to have been made by Kings Offa and Edgar and even the charters of St Dunstan would appear to be open to some suspicion, although there is every reason to think that there was a monastic establishment already existing when King Edward the Confessor, the real founder of Westminster, built the first great church on Thorney island. This great work the pious King undertook in place of a vow of pilgrimage to Rome, which he had made whilst in exile. At great cost the building was finished in a very few years, and it was altogether constructed in a style at that time new in England; it was the first Norman church ever erected in England. One writer describes it as a building "supported by many pillars and arches," and Matthew Paris speaks of it as having been built "in a new style," which, he adds, "served as a pattern much followed in the erection of other churches." A description written at the time is as follows: "The principal area or nave of the church stood on lofty arches of hewn stone, jointed together in the neatest

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WESTMINSTER ABBEY FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

manner; the vault was covered with a strong double-arched roof of stone on both sides. The cross, which embraced the choir, and by its transept supported a high tower in the middle, rose first with a low strong arch, and then swelled out with several winging staircases to the single wall, up to the wooden roof which was carefully covered with lead." Besides the tower spoken of here St Edward's church had two other towers at the western end and an apse at the eastern end. The Confessor also built the cloisters and a round Chapter House, whilst the undercroft of his dormitory still exists.

Having completed his church, Edward the Confessor summoned the nobility and clergy to the dedication. On Christmas Eve, 1065, however, before the date of the ceremony, he fell ill, and for that reason anticipated the day appointed for the solemnity. He had only time to hold it, and thus to witness the completion of his work, when he died on January 5, 1066, and was buried in the new church the following day, the feast of the Epiphany. Thirty-six years after, under Gilbert, the Norman abbot, the tomb was opened and the body found perfectly incorrupt.

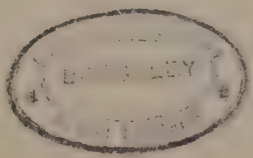
The next great event in the history of the church of Westminster is the building erected by Henry III. In 1221 the new work was commenced at the Lady chapel, and the first stone was laid that year on Whitsun Eve by the King in person. The chapel then erected was subsequently taken down only to make

way for that of Henry VII. Twenty-five years later, in 1245, the King, Henry III, pulled down the greater part of the church. Matthew Paris says he ordered the east end, the tower and transept to be taken down and rebuilt in a more elegant style at his own expense. It is difficult to say what the work cost from first to last. In 1254, nine years after it had been begun, we have the barons of the exchequer ordered to apply to it the annual sum of 3,000 marks, and it is calculated that during the twelve years of the abbacy of Richard de Crokesley the sum of £29,600 was spent in money of that time.

The result we may rejoice in to-day. "It has," says a writer, "all that soaring loftiness, the wonderful charm and beauty of art, ever fresh to the eye and educated taste, which mark it out from all others, though they may be richer or vaster in dimension." The most marked feature of the whole structure is the French arrangement of an apse and chapels radiating from the aisles, but in the carrying out of this design, Westminster shows an independent English judgement working on a foreign plan. The spaciousness of the triforia is said to have been "specially designed to accommodate thousands as witnesses of coronations and funerals of kings and queens in the chief national church."

Matthew Paris gives a minute account of the translation to Westminster of a relic of the Precious Blood in 1247. This treasure had been brought back from the Holy Land, well authenticated, as a present to the

WESTMINSTER ABBEY: NAVE AND CHOIR FROM THE WEST



King, and Henry determined to present it to Westminster. So the day after the feast of the translation of the Confessor, the King directed the London clergy to assemble at St Paul's, where the reliquary had been previously placed, and to form there a procession in copes and surplices, with crosses and banners, etc. He himself, in the dress of a poor man and on foot, carried the reliquary. The monks of Westminster with many bishops, abbots and others came to meet him as far as Durham House, and then joined in bringing the relic with honour to the abbey. There at the High Altar the King made his offering of it to St Edward and to the monks of the monastery.

Matthew Paris, who gives the account, notes an incident as regards himself. He was present at the ceremony with three companion monks of St Albans, and when the King had sat down, seeing the historian standing by and recognizing him, he called him by name and made him sit at his side on the step of the throne. He then turned to him and asked him if he had seen everything and remembered what to write, and on Matthew replying that he taken note of all that had happened, the King expressed his great satisfaction, and added, "I beg, and in begging order you, to write fully and expressly about all this, and to insert the account in a book," that it may always be remembered by posterity.

During the abbacy of Richard Ware, in 1268, the pavement in the sanctuary was laid down. Abbot Ware

had been in Rome in 1267, and it is thought that he probably brought back with him the material for this work and possibly also the workmen. To-day a sufficient portion of this beautiful inlaid pavement remains to suggest its former splendour. A second mosaic pavement of the date of Edward I may be seen in the Confessor's chapel. The altar reredos is fifteenth-century work and has two doors to it, which lead to the chapel of the shrine, the exquisite base of which was the work of "Pietro, citizen of Rome." The remains of the Confessor were translated to this new shrine on October 13, 1269. This event is thus commemorated, "the 13th day of October, the King lette translate with great solemnity the holy body of Saint Edward, King and Confessor, that before laid in the side of the choir, into the chapel at the back of the High Altar of Westminster Abbey, and there laid it in a rich shrine."

In the year 1296 King Edward I brought to England the regalia of Scotland, with the well-known stone of Scone, used at all the coronations in that latter kingdom. This was placed in the abbey church, and is still preserved beneath the coronation chair.

It is impossible, of course, to detail the events connected with the abbey in any sequence, within the narrow limits of a chapter. Simon Langham became abbot in 1349 on the death of his predecessor, Symon de Bircheston, during the great plague. Westminster was grievously visited by this sickness. On March 10,

WESTMINSTER ABBEY: THE SOUTH AMBULATORY

BERKELEY

1349, in proroguing Parliament for the second time, the King declared that it was worse than ever. Some weeks later the monastery was attacked; early in May Abbot Bircheston died at Hampstead, and almost at the same time twenty-seven of the monks were committed to a common grave in the south cloister. To relieve the urgent needs of the house and those round about it £315 13s. 8d. worth of plate and ornaments were sold. Simon Langham had only become a monk in 1335, but he early manifested his powers, and had already succeeded the prior, carried off by sickness, in April, 1349, when in May on the death of the abbot he was chosen in his place. He quickly rose to the highest position in church and state, in 1368 being created Cardinal. His body rests at Westminster in the chapel of St Benedict, beneath a tomb of alabaster. The historian of Westminster says that from first to last Cardinal Langham's benefactions to his monastery amounted to the sum of £10,800.

Nicholas Litlington, who became abbot in 1362, added to the buildings by his provident care. The great hall of the abbey was his work, the Jerusalem chamber and what is now the dormitory of the boys, also two sides of the cloister, the south and west walks, as we have them now. Beyond his additions to the buildings, Abbot Litlington gave much to the sacristy in the way of plate and precious vestments.

At Westminster there was a celebrated and frequently used sanctuary. On the return of Henry VI to

the throne in 1470, for instance, Elizabeth, Queen of Edward IV took sanctuary, and whilst still here a prince was born "and christened in the abbey," whose godfathers were the abbot and prior of the said place. The prince in time became King Edward V, when the abbot, Thomas Millyng, his godfather, was promoted to the See of Hereford. In 1483 John Estney, Millyng's successor, again received the Queen of Edward IV into sanctuary, whither she had fled with five princesses on the arrest of Earl Rivers. The news was taken to Archbishop Rotherham the Chancellor, who was then at York Place, near Westminster. "Whereupon," says the historian, "the Bishop called up his servants before daylight . . . and came before day to the Queen, about whom he found much heaviness, rumble, haste, business, conveyance and carriage of her stuff into sanctuary. Every man was busy to carry, bear and convey stuff, chests and ferdelles; no man was unoccupied and some carried more than they were commanded to another place. The Queen sat alone below on the rushes all desolate and dismayed. . . .And when he opened his windows and looked on the Thames, he might see the river full of boats of the Duke of Gloucester his servants watching that no person should go to sanctuary nor none should pass unsearched."

It was just before this time that under the patronage of Abbot Estney, Caxton began to exercise here the art of printing, and set up the first printing press in England within the precincts of Westminster Abbey.

ENTRANCE TO HENRY VIIth's CHAPEL, WESTMINSTER ABBEY

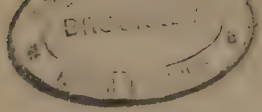
In the year 1500 John Islip was unanimously elected abbot. At that period it seemed almost certain that Henry VI would have been canonised and the abbot and community petitioned the King to remove the body from Windsor where it was buried. It is said that the monks did remove it at a cost of £500, and on January 24, the following year, 1502, Abbot Islip, assisted by several of the King's ministers, laid the foundation of the new Lady chapel, which was to be built by King Henry VII as a shrine for the remains of his saintly predecessor. The Lady chapel built by Henry III and a tavern called "The White Rose" were pulled down to make way for it. When the chapel was finished, the charges are said to have amounted to some £14,000 of money in those days. Estates had been given by the King to support the expenses, and to help the endowment Henry VII procured from the Pope permission to suppress two religious houses, Mottisford in Hampshire and Suffield in Buckinghamshire, and to devote their revenues to his foundation. In 1518 Cardinals Wolsey and Campeggio with joint legislative powers visited Westminster, and Polydore Vergil particularly noted the strictness of the life led there by the monks.

In 1536 the monks were invited to exchange certain manors belonging to Westminster for the lands of the priory of Hurley in Berkshire. At this time the dissolved Convent garden, now known as Covent Garden, appears to have passed from the abbey to the Crown. Three

years later, on January 16, 1540, the abbey was surrendered to the Crown by the abbot and twenty-four monks, and, as an abbey, ceased to exist. As it formed part of the King's declared project to create a bishopric out of the abbey, the buildings were not considered, as in other cases, "unnecessary," and so "defaced." Westminster was thus saved, although despoiled of its most precious treasures. In the list of plate two or three items that were reserved to the King's use would be particularly valuable could we but have them to-day; "a cup called 'the maser belle or St Edward's maser'; a cross of beryl" and "a dish or basin of precious stones called agate, ornamented with gold, precious stones and pearls." Of altar furniture carried off there is specially noted: "Two altar hangings, called frontals, of cloht of gold worked with lions, fleur-de-lys and the arms of the late Abbot Islip." "Five copes of needlework (one called St Peter's cope, one cope with angels of pearl, and three others called Jesses) with two tunicles; one chasuble with seven silver gilt buttons, together with albs, stoles and mantles of the same work." Sixteen copes of cloth of gold of various colours; one of blue with a chasuble, etc. These were carried away "for the King's use," but what became of them "history relateth not."

I might here close this account of Westminster Abbey, as the "new foundation" has obviously no part with the old, and the very name "abbey" is now merely a memorial of the past and a record of the "passing of

the monk." But a word may be usefully said of the brief return of the Benedictine monks to their old quarters during the reign of Queen Mary. Dr Feckenham, at the time dean of St Pauls, had been a monk at Evesham before the suppression of that monastery, and on the proposal to re-establish the monks at Westminster, he resigned his deanery at St Paul's and becoming abbot of Westminster began the old routine of monastic observance. On the accession of Queer Elizabeth the abbey was again speedily suppressed.



CHAPTER XXX

Welbeck

THE abbey of Premonstratensian canons of Welbeck was first established in the parish of Cuckney, six miles from Welbeck in the county of Nottingham, by a colony from Newhouse in 1153. The founders were originally Richard le Flemyng and Thomas de Cuckney, but in 1329 John Hothum, Bishop of Ely, bought the manor from the heirs of de Flemyng and other lands and advowsons. The manor and the lands he settled upon the canons, and he thus became acknowledged as the second founder of Welbeck Abbey, which was placed under the patronage of St James the Apostle, the saint to whom the old church of the place had been dedicated. In process of time Welbeck Abbey became possessed of ten parochial churches and two chapelries. Five of the parishes were served by the canons themselves as perpetual vicars. Welbeck Abbey claimed to have established nine other Premonstratensian houses, but in regard to two of these, namely Hales Owen and Titchfield, this pretension could not be sustained. Its position and influence were, perhaps, higher than those of other establishments of the Order in England, and before the sixteenth century it became, tacitly at least, acknowledged as the chief English house.

The gift of the bishop of Ely in 1329 entailed many obligations upon the community. They undertook, in the first place, to find eight canons who should offer up prayers for King Edward III and his grandfather, and for many specified benefactors. They promised to pray for the bishop during life, and to celebrate for ever his anniversary when dead in the most solemn way possible, and by giving doles to the poor. Whenever any of the eight appointed canons should be unable to say Mass, others were to be named to the duty.

The abbot and his canons further promised that they would themselves never do anything to try and get rid of this obligation or to lighten it. Every new abbot, before the community made their obedience to him at his installation to office, was to swear solemnly to keep this promise, and so was every novice before being admitted to the habit of the house. In order that the provisions of the agreement might never be forgotten, the deed made between the bishop of Ely and the abbot of Welbeck was to be publicly read in Chapter before the brethren each year on the day of All Souls.

Our knowledge of the history of Welbeck during the 400 years of its existence is mainly derived from the visitations and other documents preserved by Bishop Redman, the representative of the abbot of Prémontré in England, for the last part of the fifteenth century. A few earlier papers are to be found in the same *Registers*, and from one of them an interesting

insight into the procedure at an election at Welbeck may be obtained. John de Norton, the late abbot, had died, and at once the canons acquainted the abbot of the mother house, Robert, abbot of Newhouse, so that he might come to Welbeck and hold the election of a successor. April 13, 1450, was appointed for that purpose, and at this time John, abbot of Dale, was also in the house. After the High Mass of the Holy Spirit had been sung, all the canons assembled in the Chapter House, where, after prayer and consideration, the community begged the two abbots to make choice of a fitting superior for them.

After some hesitation these two prelates consented to this course, and at the end of a good deal of consultation with the fathers of the abbey, they chose one of the Welbeck canons named John Green to fill the vacant office. Upon this, the fact of the election was published in the Chapter, and, the unwilling consent of the elect having been obtained, the abbot of Newhouse, as "the father abbot," confirmed the act on behalf of the Order. All the community then proceeded to the church, singing the *Te Deum*, where they installed the newly-elected abbot and put him into possession of the church by placing the bell-cords and the keys of the doors in his hands. Then one by one the canons came, and, kneeling, renewed their obedience. The obedientiaries also, as a sign of obedience and subjection, laid their various keys at the feet of the new superior. On the part of the elect, before

WELBECK ABBEY

the community had done their obedience, the official document of the election declares that John Green, the elect, took an oath to carry out the agreement between Welbeck and Bishop John Hothum.

On May 6, 1462, Bishop Richard Redman made his first official visitation to Welbeck. He found this same John Green still abbot, but very old and infirm. The house was in a most excellent state, and all that the visitor could find to blame was a laxity in regard to the rule of silence. "Otherwise," he says, "the members of this community are united to their superior in all charity, brotherly love, and peace and manifest themselves as true sons of obedience." The choir duties are carried out exactly (*ad unguem*), and the old abbot is the first to bear all the burdens.

The next recorded visit was made in 1478: William Burton was then abbot, and the community consisted of eighteen canons and two novices. Bishop Redman thought that the abbot was trying to govern too much according to his own will and without officials, and by an exercise of his visitorial powers the bishop filled up the vacant offices and warned Br John Warburton, whom he appointed *circator*, that it was his duty to see that the cloister doors were fastened at night and at the proper times of the day. He pointed out to the abbot that there were many repairs that should be seen to at once if the house was not to be allowed to fall into ruin. The canons were to rise for the night office and were not to shirk this duty, and, as a report had

reached him that some of the community had gone hunting and shooting arrows, the visitor commanded that this should not be allowed to any.

There are indications here that the rule of the abbot was not what it should be. It was at best a great contrast to that of Abbot John Green, and four years later, when Bishop Redman came again he had to take drastic measures to save Welbeck from ruin. He found that Abbot Burton had dissipated the goods of the house; buildings were in ruin for want of repair, and lands, woods and tithes belonging to the community had been pledged without the consent of the brethren. More than this, nearly all the plate of the monastery had been pawned or got rid of in some way or other, so that only one silver cup could be produced to the visitor. As for the abbey buildings, they stood in urgent need of repair, as nothing had been done to them during this administration. The woods had been cut down without consideration to make money; the abbot also had sold all the oxen and cattle and sheep of the abbey, and the stores were so empty that it was frequently hard to find necessary supplies of oil, wax and wine. Welbeck was indeed in a state of desolation by the misrule of the superior. But there was worse; Abbot Burton was defamed in the neighbourhood for his bad life, and the visitor, after thorough inquiry, found that the report was well founded and proven. He at once removed him from his office and sent him to do penance at Barlings Abbey for the rest of his life.

For the next eight or ten years the abbey does not

appear to have been able to recover from this period of misrule. Though wrong doers are always punished, and punished severely, the laxity appears at the periodic visits in several minor matters; games for money were at one time becoming common and, of course, prohibited; too many of the community were going to the "meat room" and shirking the regular fasts; the same was seen in regard to a catching slackness in rising for midnight matins. In 1494, however, Bishop Redman is pleased to declare that he found everything again in an excellent state, and that he could see nothing to blame or to correct. The list of the community at this time shows more vigour than on previous visitations, as there are no less than five novices, all of whom are found subsequently to have persevered in the regular life. Three years later, September 3, 1497, Welbeck has the same excellent report, and in 1500, the last visitation of which we have any record, beyond the necessity of some minor corrections, Bishop Redman is able to give the same good account of the abbey.

One of the last abbots of Welbeck was John Maney, bishop of Elphin, who became commendatory of Welbeck in 1520. At the Dissolution the abbey was ruled by one Richard the abbot, and he with seventeen canons signed the deed of surrender on June 20, 1538. At that time the net value of the abbey was stated to be £249 6s. 3d. The site was granted in the same year to Richard Whalley. The goods of the abbey at the general wreck sold for £192 17s. 4d., which must have been a very small amount of their value.

CHAPTER XXXI

Whalley

THE abbey of Whalley in Lancashire was first founded in 1172 for the Cistercians by John Constable of Chester and Baron of Halton, at Stanlaw, in Cheshire. It was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin in accordance with the custom of the Order, and the name given it in the charter of foundation was *Benedictus locus*, "the blessed spot." The situation of the monastery was near the Cheshire shores of the Mersey, and this site was soon found to be low and unhealthy; at spring tides the monastery became inaccessible, the waters were constantly encroaching upon the adjoining lands, and at times they even invaded the monastic offices to the depth of three feet. In consideration of these inconveniences, Pope Nicholas IV gave permission for the monks to transfer their monastery to Whalley in Lancashire where a place had been provided for them by Henry Lacy, Earl of Lincoln. The establishment, therefore, of Whalley Abbey dates from 1296.

The building of the church was commenced at once, and it was dedicated in April, 1306. Whitaker has given a few particulars of the structure: The stone with which the buildings were constructed came from the quarries of Read and Symondstone, the church was

WHALLEY ABBEY: THE ABBOT'S HOUSE

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255 feet long, divided into a nave of ten bays and a choir and presbytery of two; the transepts, 142 feet across, had three chapels in each wing. The refectory and kitchen appear to have been completed between 1362 and 1425, and the last portion of the original plan is said to have been taken in hand in 1438.

Very little now remains of the buildings, a portion only of the south aisle wall and the south and west walls of the transept are still standing. On the outside of the south wall, where the cloister used to be, is a recess, which is supposed to have been intended for the aumbry, to hold the books used by the monks when reading in the cloister. The entrance to the Chapter House and the door of the refectory are also preserved. The infirmary lies back in its own quadrangle of 42 feet, and it contained a refectory with dormitory for the sick over it and a chapel over an undercroft. The approach to the abbey was by two gateways still remaining. The entire establishment comprised three quadrangles and outlying offices: the first and most westerly was the great cloister with the church forming the north side, the Chapter House and vestry the east, the dormitory the west, and the refectory and kitchen the south.

The foundation of Whalley was opposed by the abbot of the neighbouring Cistercian abbey of Sawley. The community of the latter monastery considered that the new establishment was too near to it, and that it was

against the constitution of the Cistercian Order for two houses to be built so close together. Further, the fact that both monasteries had to purchase provisions, etc., within the one district of Craven had already raised prices; the Sawley monks were consequently compelled to go further afield, and to be obliged to travel forty or fifty leagues always over bad roads was in reality a great injury. Also, they complained that, since the Whalley monks had been building, the monks at Sawley had found that the timber they needed cost them thirty shillings a year more than before, and the same was true in regard to fish, fowl, eggs, etc., for the refectory; fish, moreover, came to Sawley less frequently, and when the merchants did bring it, it was dearer than it ever was before. This complaint of Sawley was carried before the General Chapter of the Order, and was finally settled by a commission of Cistercian abbots in 1305. The two convents agreed to assist each other in all business matters, as if their interests were common, and by this means the nearness of one house to the other would not materially affect the prosperity of either.

The three centuries of history in this monastery do not present any incident of special interest. The last abbot, John Paslew, was chosen in 1506, and ruled the abbey for thirty years, and indeed until the seizure of the abbey by the King in 1537 at the attainder of its abbot on a charge of high treason. The story of this seizure of the monastery illustrates one of the ways by

which the crown became possessed of monastic property in the sixteenth century.

The rising of the people against the royal proceedings, and in particular against the dissolution of the smaller monasteries in Lincolnshire and the north, took place in 1536. During the later movement, known as the "Pilgrimage of Grace," the insurgents had certainly operated in the neighbourhood of Whalley. Indeed, Sawley Abbey, which was only a short distance away as we have seen, had been suppressed under the act of 1536 for dissolving the lesser monasteries. It was reopened by the people, and the monks who had been sent to Furness by the royal officials had been brought back in triumph, and at once began again their corporate life. News had come that the Earl of Derby was on his way, with a considerable force, to expel the reinstated monks, and the whole district was in a ferment to resist to the last, when Robert Aske, the leader, recognized that this would be impossible. He consequently persuaded the people "who had already attained Whalley Abbey," to "withdraw them to the mountains" again.

Beyond this mention of Whalley as a kind of rendezvous for the insurgents, there is very little, indeed, to connect either the monastery or its abbot with the rising. It is true that one witness at the subsequent trial declared that the abbot had lent a horse to Nicholas Tempest of Brashall. But Tempest's own account of this is very different. He says that he went to the

abbey "with three or four hundred men," and, "being kept out about two hours, were at last let in, for fear of burning their barns and houses. And there he [Tempest] swore the abbot and about eight of his religious according to Aske's oath." So that we have it in evidence that even the oath of the "Pilgrims" was extorted from the monks by threats of violence. The only other matter which appears against Whalley in the documents of the trial is that the Lord Darcy had had some communication with the abbey. "Memorandum," it is noted, "also Lord Darcy this Lent past sent a copy of a letter, which my Lord of Norfolk wrote to him, unto the prior of Whalley, who is now attainted of high treason, whereby it appeareth that the Lord Darcy favoured the said prior, being a traitor."

According to the available evidence, therefore, the part taken by Whalley in the Rising of the North was very slight. There is nothing at all which could be construed into any active co-operation with the insurgents. Still, it appears that Abbot Paslew was tried at Lancaster, probably by martial law, together with two of his monks, John Eastgate and William Haydock, and the abbot of Sawley. All were condemned; the latter, William Trafford, was hanged at Lancaster on March 10, 1537. The abbot of Whalley with one of his monks, Eastgate, suffered the same fate two days later at Whalley; the other member of the community one day later still, on March 13, in a field some miles from his monastery, and there his body was left

hanging for some time. The executed monks were probably still swinging before their monastery when the abbot of Furness was summoned to Whalley to make up his mind whether he would surrender his abbey or no. The ghastly sight of his brethren dangling from the gibbets may be taken to have assisted him in determining to do the King's will at once.

Meanwhile, on the attainder and execution of the abbot of Whalley, a novel interpretation of the law of treason enabled the King to take possession of the abbey. Burnet even says that the seizure of the abbey lands "pursuant to those attainders was through a great stretch of the law." Hitherto the attainder of a bishop or abbot never had been thought to entail the forfeiture of the goods of a see or a monastery, and it was left to Henry to place this construction on the law. Writing to the Earl of Sussex just at this time, the King lays down his interpretation of the law. He thanks the earl for the punishment of those who had offended him, and specially for the execution of the abbot of Whalley, as well as for having "taken order for the good direction of the house and the safe keeping of the goods without embezzlement"; as the house "hath been so sore corrupt amongst others," "it shall be meet that some order be taken for the remotion of the monks now being in the same, and that [it is proper] we should take the whole house into our hands; as by our laws we be justly, by the attainder of the said late abbot, entitled unto it; and so devise for such a new

establishment thereof as shall be thought meet for the honour of God, our surety and the benefit of the country."

Sussex is consequently charged to use all dexterity in accusing the monks of grievous offences "towards us and our commonwealth" and then to try and get them to go to other religious houses of the Order or to "receive secular habit." It is unnecessary to speculate as to whether Henry had any serious designs of re-establishing Whalley Abbey. If he had, his design quickly passed away, for by Michaelmas, 1537, one John Kechin had been appointed receiver at Whalley, and had already been at work to some effect. He had sold goods and got in rents to the value of £957 11s. 7d., had already sent up to Brian Tuke, the King's treasurer, some £491 1s. 10d., and had paid away £100 for the carriage of the bullion to London.

At Whalley, as apparently in the case of all other monasteries, the superiors of which had been attainted, none of the monks received any pension on being turned out of their old home to find their way in the world as best they might.

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